



"If, in the future [a ground war] comes up, we'll discuss and debate it"

**William Cohen,**  
US Defense Secretary

"The campaign in the air should be sufficient ... If the circumstances change, we will consider that"  
**Javier Solana, of Nato**

## WAR IN THE BALKANS

"Ultimately, a conflict is always decided on the ground"

**Gen Klaus Naumann, of Nato's military committee**

"I don't think it is a question of sitting down to do business with Milosevic at the end"

**Tony Blair**

"I repeat again, Russia will not get involved in Yugoslavia if the Americans do not push us"

**President Boris Yeltsin**

"He [Milosevic] hopes we will accept as permanent the results of his ethnic cleansing. We will not"

**President Bill Clinton**

# Nato 'sorry' for getting facts wrong

### THE DAMAGE

BY JOHN DAYSON

ONE OF three bombs aimed at the main telephone exchange in Pristina hit a residential area. Nato admitted yesterday. It had previously denied that its bombers were responsible for damage in the city centre.

Air Commodore David Wilby, the alliance military spokesman, said that the exchange was a "critical target" because it was being used for communications between Serbian forces in Kosovo and Belgrade. Nato regretted any loss of civilian life, he said.

"One bomb appeared to be seduced off the target at the final stages. Close inspection of imagery indicates that it landed some 200 to 300m away in what seems to be a small residential area," he said.

Extensive damage to the Kosovo capital was revealed to reporters on Wednesday night, on a visit organised by the Serb authorities. In a silent and deserted city centre they saw that - as well as the exchange - the post office, the largest bank and a row of civilian homes had been hit. At least 10 civilians

were said to have been killed in attacks the previous night.

Serb ministers and local people interviewed said that all the wreckage had been caused by alliance bombs, but this was flatly denied by Nato at the time. Air Commodore Wilby suggested that some of the damage had been caused by Serb forces for propaganda purposes.

"I can absolutely assure you that while Nato has attacked military targets around Pristina, and one very carefully targeted headquarters... Nato has certainly not caused the reported widespread and random damage which we believe has been orchestrated by Serbian forces," he said on Thursday.

Yesterday's admission came as Serbian state television reported that a Nato air attack on a car factory in the central Serbian town of Kragujevac on Thursday night had left 124 people injured, 24 of them seriously. It has been claimed that the plant was also used for arms and ammunition production.

For 12 days of the campaign Nato spokesmen stated with

pride that there had been virtually no civilian casualties, using this as an indication of the accuracy of its attacks. If any "collateral damage" had been caused, Slobodan Milosevic's propaganda machine would have made the most of it, they said. Then on Tuesday, Air Commodore Wilby had to apologise for a bomb going astray during a raid on Aleksinac the previous night, killing five civilians and wounding another.

At yesterday's Nato briefing,

Air Commodore Wilby said that after some success on Thursday morning, "the weather has turned against us", affecting operations. He also said that Serb forces appeared to be building up in the north of Kosovo.

In London, General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the Defence Staff, said that 10 RAF Harriers had hit two groups of vehicles on Thursday. The first attack was on a military vehicle compound in southern Kosovo and the second was against military trucks in the west. Both were successful, he said.

For 12 days of the campaign Nato spokesmen stated with



Tents providing shelter at Cavaje, Albania for thousands of Kosovo refugees cared for by the Italian group Rainbow Filippo Moneferte/AP

## Charity accuses UN of failing refugees

### AID EFFORT

BY RICHARD LLOYD PARRY in Skopje

THE AID organisation Médecins Sans Frontières accused the UN High Commissioner for Refugees yesterday of failing in its duty towards refugees from Kosovo, as criticism grows of the UN's role in the Balkans disaster.

It accused the Commissioner of failing to monitor the numbers and whereabouts of displaced Kosovars, and of allowing the Macedonian government to deport them against their will, splitting families.

"Many refugees are registered," the organisation said. "Without registration, refugees are not individuals and have no

rights and families cannot be reunified ... families were and still are being separated and transported to camps and other countries, sometimes without consent."

"MSF is extremely concerned that the minimum standards for the assistance and protection of refugees have been ignored," their statement said.

Aid workers and Nato soldiers on the ground privately have been making similar complaints for days, since the exodus began to choke the borders.

They say the UNHCR is disorganized and has left the burden of caring for the refugees

to the Macedonians, whose Slav-dominated government wants only to get rid of them and to Nato, which is a military, not a humanitarian, organisation.

"MSF is neither responsible nor able to co-ordinate humanitarian relief activities for refugees - nor should it be."

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, admitted yesterday that it will be days before order is restored in Macedonian refugee camps. She said she has no

means of helping those Albanians who were forcibly returned to Kosovo by the Serbs when Belgrade closed the border.

"I cannot do anything right now because I can't go into Kosovo without security being assured," she said.

She had spent a day visiting refugee camps and talking to political leaders in the Macedonian capital, Skopje.

"I am helpless. This is the same time I am extremely concerned about the situation over the bor-

der with Kosovo," she added. Between 120,000 and 130,000 refugees from Kosovo are still inside Macedonia, about half of them billeted with ethnic Albanian families in the predominantly Albanian western part of the country.

Mrs Ogata conceded that she has learnt many lessons, but said it would be "a matter of days" before the situation was under control.

"Criticism is being given freely by many people many times. I'd like Medicines Sans Frontières to join us in putting this into practice," she said.

Plans to airlift refugees to foreign countries, including

Britain, appear to have been suspended. "The British Government's thinking, as well as that of myself, is that it is best to host refugees in the area neighbouring their own country," Mrs Ogata said.

The tension in Macedonia took a new and potentially damaging turn yesterday when the army confirmed a 27-year-old soldier was shot dead in a fire fight with unknown ambushed shooting from inside Kosovo.

At first there was speculation it may have been Serb forces. There was also speculation that the shooting may have been carried out by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

### BRIEFING: DAY 17

- Nato air strikes continued against a wide range of targets around the clock.
- Ten Harrier GR7s engaged in missions over western Kosovo, four released weapons on targets.
- Nato said its planes carried out nearly 400 sorties in the 17th day of the conflict, had attacked a Yugoslav military convoy in Kosovo and that the "tempo and effectiveness" of its raids were increasing.
- UK troops in Macedonia are accommodating 22,000 to 25,000 refugees at Brazda and 7,000 to 8,000 at Stankovic in Macedonia.
- Nato has made 39 flights delivering aid into Macedonia.
- Nato has delivered 600 tonnes of equipment to Albania in northern Albania, 34 centres housing 22,000 refugees have been opened by the Albanian authorities.
- Nato has taken control of the Albania's main airport at Tirana.
- The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe reports that 14,000 refugees have crossed from Macedonia into Albania.
- The World Health Organisation has moved 14 emergency health kits into Montenegro.

### KOSOVO AND BALKAN CRISIS

#### PLEASE ACT NOW

Even if the hostilities cease today, the displaced people of Kosovo will need emergency assistance, food and shelter for months to come to help them simply survive.

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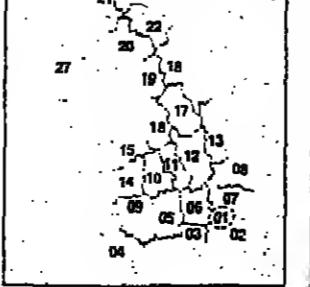
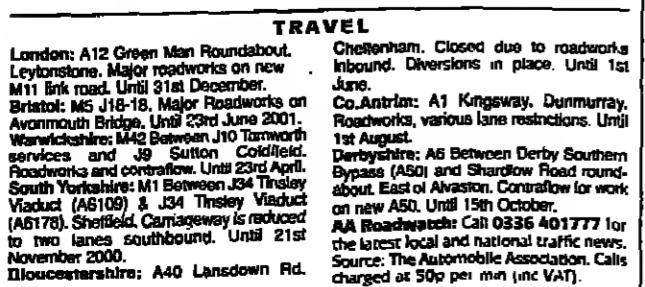
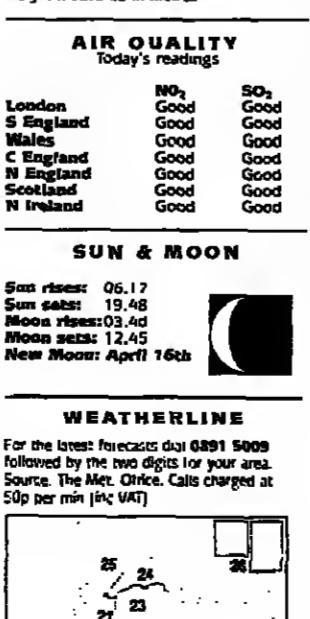
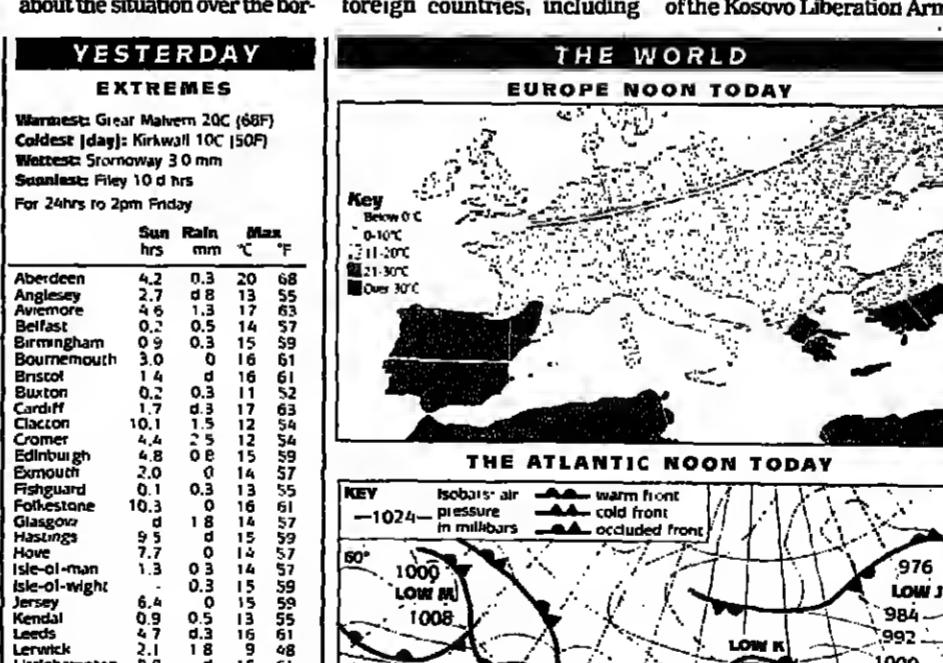
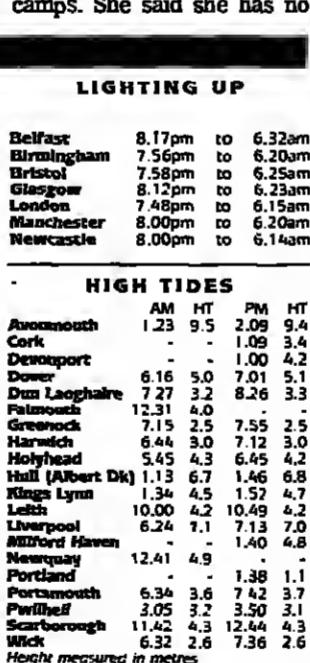
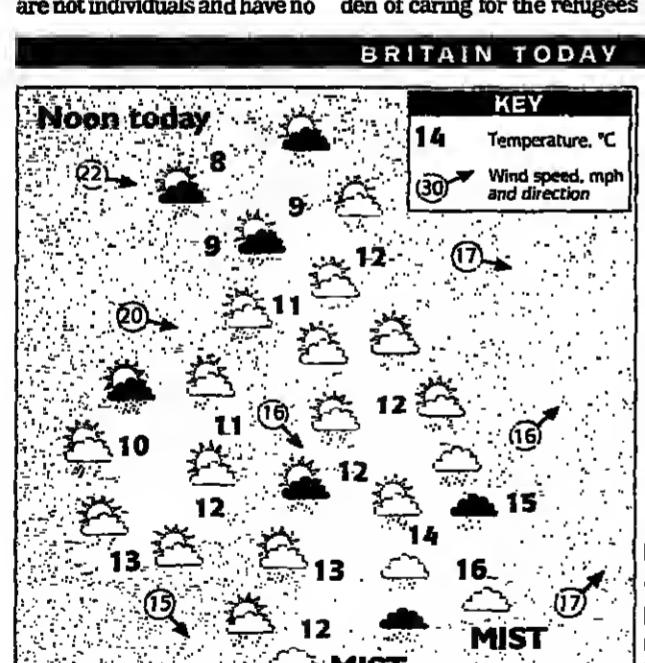
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THE AMERICAN Mid-west was swept by powerful storms yesterday, which destroyed homes and killed at least six people. The Cincinnati area was particularly hard-hit. Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed as strong thunderstorms moved through the Ohio city. Roots were torn off stores and the wind lifted a car from the ground and threw it against a wall.

London: A12 Green Man Roundabout, Leytonstone. Major roadworks on new M11 link road. Until 15th April. A10, Major Roadworks on A406 North Circular Rd. A1 Kingsway, Dummeray, Rosenthal, various lane restrictions. Until 1st August.

Derbyshire: A6 Between Derby Southern Bypass and Ashover. Major road roundabout. East of Ashover. Construction for work on new A50. Until 15th October.

AA Roadwatch Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

Gloucestershire: A40 Lansdown Rd.

Cheltenham: Closed due to roadworks. Abingdon: Diversion in place. Until 1st April.

Co. Antrim: A1 Kingsway, Dummeray, Rosenthal, various lane restrictions. Until 1st August.

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Leeds: A6109. J34 Tinsley Viaduct (A6178). Sheffield: Cammidge is reduced to two lanes southbound. Until 21st November 2000.

Ilkeston: A40 Lansdown Rd.

Cheltenham: Closed due to roadworks. Abingdon: Diversion in place. Until 1st April.

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## WAR IN THE BALKANS

# No invasion here, says Macedonia

**MEETING AT NATO HEADQUARTERS**

STEPHEN CASTLE in Brussels

MACEDONIA RULED out use of its territory for an "aggressive" Nato ground invasion against Serbia yesterday, but said that Western troops could use it as a "staging post" before entering Kosovo to police an agreed peace deal. The statement came after a visit by Macedonian ministers to Nato headquarters in Brussels - the latest Western effort to woo the small, but strategically crucial former Yugoslav republic.

As Nato's warplanes continued bombing Serb military targets in Kosovo, the council held an hour-long meeting with Macedonia's foreign and defence ministers, Aleksander Dimitrov and Nikola Kjusev, offering new security guarantees if they are attacked.

The ethnically and politically fragile Balkan state is being

courted relentlessly. At Luxembourg on Thursday European Union foreign ministers agreed a package of financial and political blandishments. The Macedonians were offered an association agreement with Europe and a role in a new forum to stabilise the region. EU membership was specifically held out as an eventual prospect.

The EU also approved a package of financial aid worth 100 million euros (£67m) for Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro to cover costs of sheltering refugees.

Despite Macedonia's brutal treatment of refugees, thousands of whom were deported from a border camp to Albania, official communiques have lavished praise on the Skopje government. Mr Kjusev said he had heard "words of gratitude,

unlike some of the criticism that was showed among the media". He attacked the BBC and CNN for unfair reporting.

The Macedonians are sensitive about the possibility of providing a staging post for a ground invasion of Kosovo, and Mr Kjusev insisted yesterday that his territory could not be used for any kind of military aggressive action against neighbouring territories".

But he drew a distinction between this and the movement of troops into Kosovo to police an agreement reached with Belgrade. "If there is the agreement of the Yugoslav government for entrance into Yugoslavia then they will be allowed. Unless this happened, the passing of the Nato forces into Yugoslavia cannot be accepted," he said.

Refugees Ekrem (left) and Burim waiting at a hospital in Kukes, northern Albania; they were injured by shrapnel as they fled Kosovo EPA

## US concerned as the war cost reaches \$500m in two weeks

**AMERICAN REACTION**

BY MARY DEJEVSKY in Washington

WITH THE US Congress set to reconvene on Monday after the Easter recess, politicians are gearing up for a good old-fashioned row over the mounting cost of the Kosovo operation - estimated to have reached \$500m (£300m) in the first two weeks.

At stake for Democrats is the Clinton administration's reputation for sound finances and their own objective of more social spending. At stake for Republicans - their much-advertised hopes for tax cuts. These preliminary skirmishes over money for the undeclared Balkan war are so far as nothing compared with the furious blame-game already washing into the public domain from the inner sanctum of the Clinton administration.

It is a fight to the death or dismissal. First out of the gate with a pre-emptive strike was the CIA, whose director, George Tenet, told friendly reporters just two days after the start of air strikes that intelligence advice to the administration had been sound. It had warned the administration in good time both about the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's malign intentions and what he was likely to do in the event that "peace" talks failed. The CIA had a particular interest in clearing its name early, as it was still smarting from the blame that attached to it a year ago after its failure to detect that India and Pakistan were about to conduct their first nuclear tests.

With President Clinton managing to remain above the im-



Stephane Rousseau

An RAF Harrier, part of the massive and costly Nato force

mediate fray, into the dock came the Pentagon, which was blamed - perversely perhaps - for not having wanted or prepared sufficiently to fight. The joint chiefs of staff were said to have called for tougher economic sanctions in preference to military action. Shortages of air-launched cruise missiles, aviation fuel and provision for refugees were laid at their door. The joint chiefs struck back,

implying that they were hamstrung by a lily-livered White House that thought it could win a war by "immaculate coercion" - fighting exclusively from the air without US casualties. They argued that there could be no middle way: either the White House wanted a war, in which case it had to be ready for ground troops, bodybags and all, or it should forget the whole idea.

The latest scapegoat has been the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. After a rash of (Pentagon-inspired) articles claiming that it was her war, she took her case direct to the viewing public. On CNN's *Larry King Show*, she defended military action as "the only way". Two key officials, meanwhile, have kept a judiciously low profile. The National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, who took the initial flak for the White House rejection of CIA and Pentagon advice, appeared less and less confident before the cameras in the first three-day propaganda effort by the White House and has made no subsequent public statements.

The Deputy Secretary of State, the resident Russia and regional specialist, Strobe Talbott, has been even quieter.

**TIMETABLE**  
**DAY 17****Friday 9 April**

2am The Serbian news agency, Tanjug, reports Nato jets have struck an oil storage depot in Smederevo, east of Belgrade. It says at least seven missiles exploded in Kragujevac, 55 miles south of Belgrade.

7am Serbian forces and KLA guerrillas exchange machine-guns fire on the Yugoslav-Albanian border and two mortar shells land in Albania.

7am About 800 Kosovo refugees enter Macedonia, saying Serbian police stripped them of all their possessions

9am United Nations refugee agency says that 10,000 ethnic Albanian refugees who were missing have been located

11.05am Tanjug says that five explosions have been heard around Pristina.

2pm Nato says there is a Serb build-up of forces north of 2.05pm

Nato says a bomb aimed at the main telephone exchange in the centre of Pristina on Tuesday struck a residential area.

3pm Spyros Kyriakou of Cyprus meets Slobodan Milosevic, to try to get three United States soldiers released.

## France and Nato deny report of US distrust

**NATO TROOPS**

BY JOHN LICHFIELD in Paris

FRANCE AND Nato yesterday vehemently denied a British press report that suggested France was not trusted by its allies to play a full-blooded part in the Balkan war.

The report, in *The Daily Telegraph*, said the United States was refusing to share its most secret plans and intelligence with France. Last year a French major at Nato headquarters was arrested for passing information to Serbia on likely alliance bombing targets. Earlier, another major was withdrawn from Bosnia after becoming too close to the Bosnian-Serb military.

To that extent, the fears in Washington reported by *The Daily Telegraph* are grounded in undisputed fact. But yesterday both Nato and the French

government categorically denied any suggestion that the US was withholding information from France or any other ally.

The US is notoriously reluctant to share all its intelligence information with anyone, including Britain. There may be some information that - given the pro-Serb leanings of a few French officers - Washington prefers to keep to itself.

France is out in the military wing of Nato but it is at the heart of the Nato assault on Serbia, with 53 aircraft engaged more than any country save the US and Britain.

France has traditional ties to Serbia but 70 per cent of French people - more than in Britain or the US - support the Nato campaign. The government is divided between a

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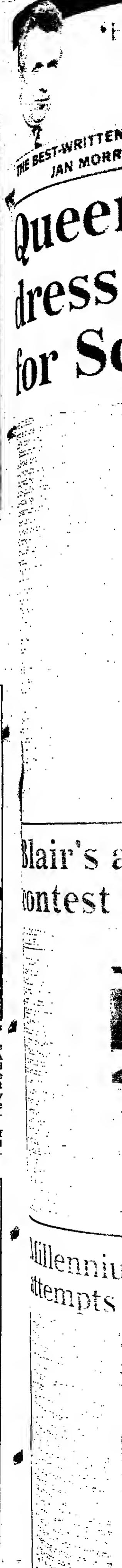
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## IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



'He was absolutely brilliant at door-to-door canvassing, especially with the more mature ladies. They'd open the door and there was Hutch'

How they met: Martin Bell on his old friend David Soul



THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING ALAIN DE BOTTON, SIMON SINGH, DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, JAN MORRIS, DEAR ANNIE, ALAN WATKINS, JOAN SMITH, MICHAEL BYWATER, AN WILSON AND WALLACE ARNOLD

# Queen will dress down for Scotland

THE QUEEN will be dressing down for the opening of Scotland's home-rule parliament in Edinburgh. In keeping with the Scots' notion of the people as sovereign, the ceremony on 1 July will be dignified but without the gilded extravagances of the state opening of the Westminster parliament.

Scotland's new legislators, civic leaders and young people will process on foot from Parliament House, scene of the last meeting of the pre-Union parliament in 1707, to the temporary home of its successor in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall. It is intended to bring her closer to the public than the enclosed state carriage used in Westminster.

The Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince of Wales and escorted by 16 troopers of the Household Cavalry, will travel along the Royal Mile in an open carriage from Holyrood Palace to the Assembly Hall. It is intended to bring her closer to the public than the enclosed state carriage used in Westminster.

The main elements of the ceremony were announced in Edinburgh yesterday, although it will be for the Presiding Officer of the new parliament - the equivalent of Speaker - and newly elected members to finalise details.

The Scottish Office said the Queen would not be wearing a

BY STEPHEN GOODWIN  
Scotland Correspondent

crown and full ceremonial robes. "MSPs may be the first Green elected to national parliament in Britain. After decades of standing as no-hoppers, mocked by many as the 'sandals and brown rice' element, the fairer voting system for the Scottish elections give Greens a good chance of at least one seat."

"The Queen will dress in a manner appropriate to a dignified, historic but modern occasion."

George Reid, constitutional affairs spokesman of the Scottish National Party, said it would have been wrong for the Queen to be wearing robes while surrounded by men in tartan.

The Duke of Hamilton, hereditary keeper of the Palace of Holyrood House - a role his ancestors have fulfilled since 1640 - kept his own counsel.

"The last thing the Queen needs is advice from someone like me on how to dress," he said.

The Queen will make an opening speech before the 129 parliamentarians and 500 guests, but will not read out the home-rule government's legislative programme.

One thousand children from all over Scotland will parade past a royal dias outside the Assembly Hall and there will be an RAF fly-past, despite earlier

differences over a military element.

Among the newly elected MSPs may be the first Green elected to national parliament in Britain. After decades of standing as no-hoppers, mocked by many as the "sandals and brown rice" element, the fairer voting system for the Scottish elections give Greens a good chance of at least one seat."

The system also benefits other fringe parties, notably the Scottish Socialists headed by Tommy Sheridan, the Glasgow councillor who went to jail rather than pay the poll tax.

It is ironic the Greens' break should come in Scotland, where voters have traditionally shown least interest in middle-class notions of saving the planet, but it raises intriguing possibilities. The Greens could actually hold the balance of power in a Scottish Parliament, pushing up the agenda on the issue of banning genetically modified food.

Greens sit in 17 parliaments across Europe but the winter take-all system in Britain has always thwarted them at the top level. Scotland does not even have any Green councillors while in England and Wales there are more than 100.

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Seamus Heaney, who backed out of the running for Poet Laureate, saying: 'It's not my job' Colin McPherson



Carol Ann Duffy: One of two favourites for the post



Andrew Motion: Also on Poet Laureate shortlist

## Heaney rules out Laureateship

BY DAVID LISTER  
Arts News Editor

SEAMUS HEANEY has ruled himself out of being Britain's next Poet Laureate. Heaney, who has won the Nobel prize for Literature was one of the front runners for the post which will be announced later this month.

There had been concern in both Downing Street and the Department of Culture that Heaney's known republicanism could make such an appointment highly controversial.

But yesterday Heaney saved them further worry when he

to take sideswipes at British rule in Ireland.

Some of those involved in the selection process - organisations such as the Poetry Society are consulted - had hoped that he would accept the post as a way of emphasising the changing relationship between Britain and Ireland at a crucial time in the peace process.

But he said in an interview with BBC Northern Ireland, to be broadcast tomorrow, that he has had many ambitions in his

life, and being Poet Laureate is not one of them. "I simply couldn't do it, it's not my job."

His refusal comes two months after Yorkshire-born Tony Harrison sent Buckingham Palace his "refusal" with the flamboyant gesture of a scathing 94-line poem in a national newspaper.

The favourites now are Carol Ann Duffy, the Scottish born poet, and Andrew Motion, the biographer of Keats and Philip Larkin. Tony Blair will be making a recommendation to the Queen within a few weeks.

Both Ms Duffy and Mr Motion would be willing to make Poet Laureate a more public and educational post, probably going into schools, and certainly creating verse for public occasions other than royal events.

The next poet laureate is likely for the first time to be paid for his or her verse. But there is little chance of being able to give up the day job. The salary is expected to be around £10,000.

## Blair's allies shelve plan to contest NEC elections

BY ANDREW GRICE  
Political Editor

TONY BLAIR's allies have abandoned plans to run a slate of candidates in the elections to Labour's ruling body amid fears of a grassroots backlash against the Prime Minister.

The rethink follows growing criticism inside the party of the "control freakery" by Labour's Millbank headquarters in London, which has been accused of influencing the choice of candidates for the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament and Scottish and Welsh assemblies.

Last year, left-wingers captured four of the six places representing local parties on the National Executive Committee (NEC), in what was widely seen as a big setback for Mr Blair.

His allies now admit that it was "counter-productive" for the loyalist Members First organisation to run candidates in



Tony Blair campaigning in Dundee yesterday Scotsman

the poll. It was only two seats, despite spending a reported £100,000 on its campaign.

Privately, Blairites concede that Millbank was too closely associated with the moderate group. "Last year was not a success and we have no desire to repeat it," one party source said.

Instead, Mr Blair's supporters are adopting a "softly, softly" strategy, in which they hope to

oust or one two of the four left-wingers elected last year.

They are pinning their hopes on Lord Sawyer, who retired as Labour's general secretary last October. He is well liked, although left-wingers accused him of attacking their candidates last year. Another Blairite hope is Delph Morgan, 37, who is chief executive of the breast cancer research charity Breakthrough.

Others hoping to keep their NEC seats are left-wingers Cathy Jamieson and Pete Willsman and Blairites Michael Cashman and Diana Jeuda.

## Millennium baby attempts 'risky'

BY PAUL McCANN  
Media Editor

HEALTH OFFICIALS have warned couples not to fall for "media hype" by trying to conceive tonight in an attempt to have the first baby of the new millennium.

Tonight is theoretically the ideal night to conceive in order to give birth on 1 January. Tabloid newspaper editors and publicists such as Max Clifford are already promising untold millions to the first baby of the new year. But consultants are worried that a surge in births could pose health risks because hospitals will be operating with few staff.

Chemists are reporting a jump in the sales of pregnancy tests and ovulation predictors.

But family planning experts are warning that the chances of timing a birth exactly were slim.

Only five per cent of women

have babies when forecast. Tonight ITV is screening a programme with a guide to conception and romantic films while Classic FM has a night of "smooth classics".

A spokeswoman for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said: "The notion that the nation is going to be bonking [tonight] in order to have a baby on a certain day is absurd. Would-parents want to conceive when it's right for them."

In Norway workers were given a morning off so they could use the time to produce a millennium baby. Anton Dahl,

the Mayor of Kaufstein, said:

"This is a big joint effort for our town and I expect everyone to do their best."

### IN BRIEF

#### Baker suspended over death note

A BAKERY WORKER was suspended yesterday after a death threat was found in a loaf of bread sold at Marks & Spencer. The note - which warned: "If you eat this bread you will die a toxic death" - was discovered by a woman who bought the loaf in Guildford, Surrey on Monday.

#### Pupils 'saw porn in police station'

THE POLICE Complaints Authority is investigating claims that two children, aged 12, saw a pornographic video when they were taken to Formby police station, Merseyside, after playing truant from school. They said the film was playing on TV when they were put in a room.

#### Woman killed by poison wine

AN INQUEST recorded a verdict of misadventure yesterday on Charlotte Common, 55, who died after drinking wine containing methyl alcohol in Egypt. A friend who drank it probably survived only because she added brandy. The Newcastle upon Tyne hearing was told.

#### Rothschilds' £25m looted art sale

A MASSIVE collection of art, once stolen by the Nazis from the Rothschild family, is expected to fetch an estimated £25m when it goes under the hammer at Christie's in London. The collection includes a Frans Hals portrait worth £5m and a medieval Book of Hours, worth £2m.

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## MURDOCH BLOCKED

# 'Damage to the quality of football'

By PETER THAL LARSEN

THE MONOPOLIES and Mergers Commission's 254-page report - probably the most detailed study of the British football industry and its relationship with television - has massive implications for the future ownership of football clubs.

Although the report deals specifically only with British Sky Broadcasting's (BSkyB) takeover of Manchester United, the MMC's findings appear to rule out any broadcaster buying a Premier League football club in the future.

The report seems also to set an important precedent by finding that the proposed takeover would have "damaged the quality of British football" by further widening the gap between rich and poor clubs and giving BSkyB added influence over the Premier League, "leading to some decisions which did not reflect the long-term interests of football".

In its four-and-a-half month investigation, the MMC considered a huge number of submissions from supporters' organisations, football clubs, rival media groups and industry regulators. The submissions, which were overwhelmingly hostile, attacked the deal with a large variety of arguments.

However, the MMC appears mainly to have looked at one key issue: whether BSkyB owning Manchester United would affect competition from other broadcasters in the battle for Premier League television rights, thereby reducing competition in the pay-television market as a whole.

The report identifies BSkyB as the dominant pay-TV company in the UK, and ascribes its

## THE MAIN POINTS

- The deal would bring together the only provider of premium sports channels in Britain and the strongest English Football Club.
- The merger would disadvantage other companies planning to bid for Premier League rights, thereby reducing competition in the wider pay-TV market.
- The merger would reinforce the trend towards inequality of wealth between clubs.
- The undertakings offered by BSkyB and Manchester United did not address the MMC's concerns or were deemed unworkable.
- As a result, the MMC recommended that the deal should be blocked.

success, by large, to its control of Premier League television rights. It also describes Manchester United as the dominant club "by any measure". At the same time, however, the MMC appears to take an unusually suspicious view of the two companies and the undertakings that they offered in an attempt to help clear the deal.

In response to almost all the promises offered by BSkyB and Manchester United, the MMC's response is that it, effectively, does not believe they

will be kept. In drawing up its report, the MMC was hampered by uncertainty over the future of Premier League television rights.

The Premier League, which negotiates the television deal on behalf of its members, is fighting a court case against the Office of Fair Trading, which argues that the league is behaving as a cartel.

If the OFT wins the case, the market for television rights will be blown open.

As a result, the MMC looked at four scenarios. It considered the impact of the BSkyB/Manchester United takeover if the Premier League both won and lost its case. It also looked at both those scenarios if the takeover was followed by a wave of similar mergers between broadcasters and football clubs.

In all of those cases, the MMC concluded that the merger would improve BSkyB's chances of securing Premier League rights in the future. "We would expect this further to restrict entry into the sports premium channel market by new channel providers, causing the prices of BSkyB's sports channel to be higher, and choice and innovation less, than they otherwise would be."

One of the main concerns voiced to the MMC was that Manchester United would be able to tip off BSkyB about bids from rival broadcasters. In an attempt to ease these fears, the club offered to withdraw from the negotiations - and not to use its vote when the decision is being made.

However, this did not convince the MMC. "We do not believe that undertakings could ever prevent informal flows of

information in an organisation like the Premier League," it concludes. The MMC also found that constructing a "Chinese wall" between the two companies would work.

The MMC also gives short shrift to the argument that ownership of football clubs by media groups is well established elsewhere. For example, AC Milan is owned by the Italian media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi, while Canal Plus, the French pay-TV broadcaster, owns Paris Saint Germain.

However, the MMC decided that the different structure of football, and of broadcasting in Italy and France, made the comparison meaningless.

While the report is dominated by the discussion of the market for football rights and the pay-TV market as a whole, the MMC also tackles the issue of football in general.

In particular, the MMC decides the merger would give BSkyB more power in its dealings with the Premier League, especially in changing the tim-

ing of matches to suit its television schedule. The MMC finds that the takeover will also "reinforce the trend towards greater inequality of wealth between clubs, weakening the smaller ones".

"On both counts, the merger may be expected to have the adverse effect that the quality of English football would be damaged," the MMC writes.

It added that there was no undertaking BSkyB could offer which would prevent this from happening. "Effective

remedies would involve a high degree of intervention by the Government in the administration of football," it argues.

Interestingly, the MMC adds that the trend towards inequality would be made even worse if the takeover led to a wave of similar mergers between other clubs and broadcasting groups - a view that could help to scupper NTL's proposed acquisition of Newcastle United, which was referred to the MMC yesterday.

In conclusion, the MMC delivered its verdict on the merger in such a way that left Stephen Byers, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, with very little option but to block the deal.

Mr Byers said: "The adverse effects of the merger... appear to us to be very serious. As it is our view that no undertakings would remove these adverse effects, we conclude that prohibiting the merger is both an appropriate and a proportionate remedy, and we recommend it accordingly."

## Byers a moderniser determined to make his mark

STEPHEN BYERS set himself an ambitious target as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry - to be more Blairite than Tony Blair.

Describing himself as an "outider" for Blairism, he grabbed headlines by pronouncing the latest New Labour mantra: "The reality now is that wealth creation is more important than wealth redistribution."

Mr Byers' speech to City au-

BY ANDREW GRICE  
Political Editor

dience upset traditionalist Labour MPs. Some ministerial colleagues saw it as an attempt to escape the shadow of Peter Mandelson. Mr Byers succeeded him at the Department of Trade and Industry when he resigned last December after the disclosure of his £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson.

Although Mr Mandelson loved the DTI, the one decision he would have not minded avoiding was the hot potato that landed in his lap when BSkyB launched its bid for Manchester United.

Indeed, Mr Byers faced the most difficult decision of his political life when he left for his Easter break armed with the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the takeover.

Mr Byers, who will be 46 next

week, is seen as a possible future Labour leader. He and Alan Milburn, who succeeded him as Chief Treasury Secretary when he moved to the DTI, are regarded by some as the "Blair and Brown" of the MPs who entered Parliament in 1992. They shared a Commons office, like Mr Blair and Mr Brown eight years earlier, and are friends who may become leadership rivals.

Mr Byers, who won promotion to the Cabinet five months before Mr Milburn, is perceived as being just ahead of his ally in the future leadership stakes. "He has the intellect and the steel; he is the more substantial figure," said one Blair ally.

He became MP for Wallsend in 1992, and made his mark as a leading moderniser before the 1997 election, when he told journalists over dinner in a Blackpool

restaurant that Labour should break its historic links with the trade unions. His words found their way on to the front pages and a huge row broke out in the middle of the conference of the Trades Union Congress.

But Mr Byers refused to back down - for fear of sending voters a signal Labour would be "soft" on the unions - and Mr Blair was said to be impressed by his coolness under fire.

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# Severe setback for media empire

RUPERT MURDOCH'S global ambitions received a rude shock yesterday when the Government stopped him getting his own way in Britain for the first time since 1969.

The rejection of his bid for Manchester United is the latest in a series of setbacks for the Australian-American's media empire. As well as blowing a hole in his strategy to dominate the future of British football, it might severely damage his present monopoly of British pay-TV.

At a time when he is investing heavily in launching a digital television service, he finds his British football monopoly threatened and his chances of building his business in Europe undermined. It is the biggest reversal for the billionaire's company since he was almost bankrupted by debts in the early Nineties.

One reason for buying Manchester United was as a hedge against losing the exclusive television rights to the Premier League. The threat to the contract comes from the Restrictive Practices Court, which is currently hearing a case brought by the Office of Fair Trading against the Premier League.

The OFT contends that the league acts as a cartel when it sells exclusive television rights for all the top English clubs.

The court's decision will be known in the summer and if it tears up BSkyB's deal with the Premier League, there will be a free-for-all as teams sell rights to their games to individual broadcasters, undermining his Sky Sports channels.

The setback comes after a series of rebuffs for Mr Murdoch in his attempt to break into

the lucrative continental market for pay-TV. Proposals to merge BSkyB with Canal Plus of France were recently rejected out of hand. Pierre Lescure, head of Canal Plus, was quoted as saying that there was a time when he was a little afraid of Mr Murdoch. "We are no longer afraid. We are at least his equal now." Attempts to break into the Italian and German pay-TV markets have been similarly rebuffed.

Seasoned City observers said last night the unequivocal nature of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's findings against BSkyB, as well as its exceptionally hostile tone, were virtually unprecedented. Extreme scepticism is expressed throughout the report, and on a number of occasions the MMC states that it doesn't believe or trust Sky's undertakings or statements.

One investment banker said: "The regulators have come down on him like a ton of bricks. This doesn't bode well for his ambitions, either in Britain or beyond. The MMC seems to be saying he is a monopolist who must be curbed."

Even if the Restrictive Practices Court allows the Premiership to continue selling television rights on the existing basis, BSkyB's contract with the League ends in 2001.

After 2001 big revenues from

pay-per-view football may tempt some clubs to set up their own television channels to screen games and cut out broadcasters such as BSkyB. Mr Murdoch needed Manchester United to secure the biggest draw in the

pay-per-view market. The other threatening scenario after 2001 would be if the Premier League itself set up a television channel to sell games to cable, satellite and digital broadcasters.

The decision will also have an impact on Mr Murdoch's plans outside the UK. Ownership of Manchester United would have given him a say in the shape of any future European super league - and who wins its television rights.

This is the first regulatory reverse for Mr Murdoch in the UK since he tried to become chief executive of London Weekend Television in the late Sixties, and it may have an impact on his close links with Tony Blair.

Many Labour MPs opposed the deal and feared the Government would try to find a way to wave it through.

The special Blair-Murdoch

relationship was sealed on the first night of the 1997 general election campaign, when Stuart Higgins, editor of *The Sun* at the time, telephoned the Prime Minister's press secretary to tell him the Murdoch-owned paper was to declare its support for Mr Blair on the next day's front page.

The contrast with the previous election could not have been greater. On polling day in 1992, *The Sun's* front page, showing Neil Kinnock's head superimposed on a lighthouse, said: "If Kinnock wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights."

Mr Blair adopted a very different strategy with Mr Murdoch from his predecessors, epitomised when he flew to Hayman Island off Australia to address Mr Murdoch's editors and executives at his News

Corp's annual brain-storming session.

What, if anything, did Mr Murdoch get in return for supporting Mr Blair? Perhaps the two things that mattered most to him. First, Labour dropped

its previous plans for a tougher regime on cross-media ownership, which would have forced him to sell some of his news

papers to keep BSkyB.



Rupert Murdoch (centre) watching his Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team in the United States

John Soo Hoo/AP

Second, the Blair government rejected demands in Parliament to stop "predatory pricing" by newspapers, a tactic pioneered by *The Times*, owned by Mr Murdoch's News International. However, there is growing concern within News Corp that this concession may now be in jeopardy. John Bridgeman, director-general of fair trading, is due to decide

shortly whether to refer the matter to the Competition Commission.

Mr Blair has also helped Labour's old adversary by watering down trade union recognition rights, after fierce lobbying by News International, and by supporting Mr Murdoch's hopes to expand into Italian television during a phone call with Romano Prodi,

who was Italian prime minister at the time.

Although Mr Murdoch will

not be happy about the Government's decision to block BSkyB's bid for Manchester United, some aides do not believe he will regard it as a "make or break" issue. Others take a different view. One said: "Blair will be punished for this."

Ministers, naturally, hope oth-

erwise. "We don't think he will go to the stake over this," a government source said last night.

There is little enthusiasm in Mr Murdoch's group for William Hague, despite the Tory leader's opposition to the single currency. Mr Murdoch, who likes backing winners, may calculate that it is in his best business interests to stick with Mr Blair.



"United is what matters"

## Fans hail decision as a great victory for the game

BY LINUS GREGORIADIS

THE BLOCKING of the deal with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB was hailed by fans last night as a "victory for football".

Andy Walsh, chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (IMUSA), said: "Back at the beginning of September when the takeover was made public, nobody gave us a snowball's chance in hell of blocking the bid. But, through a passionate belief in the need for United to remain independent, we have

succeeded... our feeling is one of absolute euphoria."

Independent shareholders were equally jubilant. Paul Richards, of the anti-Murdoch group, said: "Manchester United's future is pretty well assured as an independent company and an incredibly successful company... I think this has drawn a line in the sand. All those media conglomerates who've been planning to take

over clubs will have to go back to the drawing board."

Ray Eckersley, a member of IMUSA and a shareholder, called for Martin Edwards, the club's chief executive, to resign. "For the way he has treated the fans purely for his own commercial interests, he has to go," he said.

Steve Briscoe, a fan, said: "It's not a soap brand - you can't go and watch another team, like Liverpool. It's football, and Manchester United is what matters."

The club issued a statement which read: "Although disappointed by this decision, the board is confident that Manchester United will maintain its record of success."

John Redwood, the Tory trade and industry spokesman, said the decision left unresolved questions. "The Government still owes the media industry and the sporting world an explanation about what it wants to happen next. We need to know how clubs can profit from their valuable media rights as they are an important source of money to develop the game."

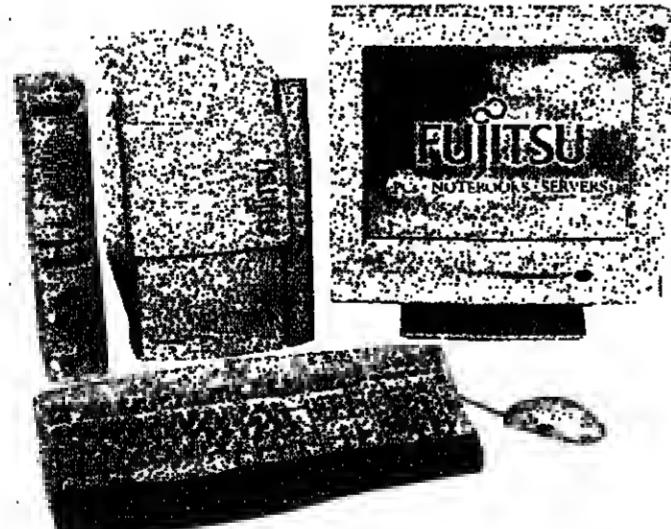
"We need to know if this means that the Government is to allow clubs to negotiate individually with TV companies, and the media needs to know what kind of promotional links it can develop in the sporting world. This one-off decision is half-baked - it leaves everyone unsure of how sport and the media can develop together."

David Chidgey, the Liberal Democrat trade and industry spokesman, said: "This is a long-overdue signal from the MMC that News International's predatory ambitions must be curbed."

Mark Booth, BSkyB's chief executive, said he felt the ruling set "an unfortunate precedent for other British clubs and companies".

Jeff Farmer, head of sports production for ITV, said: "This helps to make sure there is a level playing field. I am sure the next time the Premiership rights are sold in 2001, they will be sold on a broader platform."

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# Cockle wars being fought on beaches

DEEP IN Dylan Thomas country "no good boyo" is increasingly turning to the shoreline to earn his beer money. The prospect of making a few bob on the side by illegally raiding the cockle beds has stirred him from his legendary inertia.

Organised gangs of ne'er-do-wells from Llanelli and Laugharne are plundering the molluscs under the very noses of fishery protection officers. The officials are spat at and threatened with violence for attempting to protect the harvest.

The cockle rustlers, who are attempting to muscle in on the industry, operate under cover of darkness. They are equipped with sieves, rakes and stolen four-wheel-drive vehicles for making off with the booty. Lookouts warn the poachers of the presence of inspectors by mobile phone. Fist fights often erupt between rival gangs as they compete for the most toothsome specimens.

The activities are becoming an increasing headache for the South Wales Sea Fisheries

BY BARRIE CLEMENT

Committee, which admits that the rustlers are slippery customers. Inspectors have nowhere to hide in the vast wastes of muddy sand exposed by the retreating tide. "When they're out stealing cockles, they are not breaking into people's homes. The greater the value of cockles, the more they go poaching and the lower the crime rate in town."

The price of cockles reached a record £25 a hundredweight towards the end of last year, but has since slipped to £10. Nevertheless the cockleshell cowboys of South West Wales are often out in force.

"They seem to get a taste for it last year when the prices were high," according to an official at the fisheries committee.

It is a risky business. A thorough knowledge of tides is necessary and so is the position of deep gutters, which can't be seen in the dark. The quicksand is also best avoided, says Byron Preston of Penclawdd Shellfish, a co-operative formed by 11

families in the area. The remnants of a recent night can be seen off Llanelli in the shape of a four-wheel-drive vehicle that got stuck and has stayed there ever since, disappearing from view when the tide is in. A minority of the raiders are families who bring their children along to gather what locals believe are the juiciest, meatiest cockles in the world.

While the rustlers get much

of the bad publicity, locals point out that licence holders who fish in the Burry Inlet are not above turning a dishonest cockle. In some instances they have even taken to "laundering" the ill-gotten molluscs of the poachers by selling them on to merchants, said a spokesman for the fisheries inspectorate.

Some official operators, such as Jeff Williams who has

fished in the licensed Burry Inlet between Llanelli and Penclawdd for 38 years, have incurred the wrath of the committee by exceeding the quota. Mr Williams was caught with more than the legal 500 hundredweight per day and has been suspended from the beds for three months.

Not that there is an insatiable appetite for the product locally. Mr Williams says that

the increasing range of food available from all over the world means that South Wales are turning their noses up at cockles and lava bread, the dark green viscous mush made out of seaweed.

Most of the output of Penclawdd Shellfish ends up in omelettes and fish stews on the plates of continents. When they have a mind to, locals eat them doused in malt vinegar and powdered liberally with white pepper.

What with the fluctuations in price, the deprivations of cowboys and the sporadic attentions of fishery inspectors, the industry is in something of a turmoil.

"People from London will look at me gathering cockles out in the estuary and say, 'Look at that lucky bugger by there,'" said Mr Williams. "I tell you it's no picnic."



A licensed cockle dealer on the Penclawdd Sands, the scene of cockle rustling under the noses of fisheries protection officers Rob Stratton

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Blondes who didn't revert to the dye bottle were seen as more popular than those with other hair colours

This hair colour was seen as indicating a shy person while the fiery redhead stereotype appears no longer to exist

## Dumb blonde image is still alive and well

BY CHERRY NORTON

THE DUMB blonde image perpetuated by Marilyn Monroe is as alive today as it was in the 1950s, according to a new study. Researchers have found that people make snap judgements about levels of intelligence, shyness and popularity based on a woman's hair colour.

"Most people are unaware that they are reverting to stereotype, which is frightening if they are interviewing someone or the meeting has an important outcome," said Doctor Tracy Cassidy of the University of Sunderland, who presented his findings at the British Psychological Society's annual conference yesterday.

The research showed that platinum blondes were rated as less intelligent, brunettes as more shy and natural blondes as more popular when compared with other hair colours. In the study, which involved 120 men and women aged between 20 and 25, participants assessed four photographs of a 21-year-old female model who was wearing a brown, red, natural blonde or platinum wig.

## Brain 'lag' makes teenagers clumsy

BY CHERRY NORTON

ADOLESCENT BOYS are clumsy and awkward because their brains cannot keep up with their growth rate, according to new research. But this embarrassing stage should last only a year.

Dr Dorothy Heffernan, of the University of Strathclyde, studied 55 boys aged 12 to 13 - when growth spurts normally occur. In the previous six months, 22 of them had grown rapidly - 5.5cm - and the others, 3cm. She tested the boys' co-ordination using a reaching test: the boys had to estimate how far they could reach with a long pole with a weight at the

end and then attempt to do it. The boys in the rapid-growth group over-estimated their ability and were twice as likely to fall over than the other boys.

"Our prediction of how far we can reach is based on an understanding of the size and shapes of our bodies," Dr Heffernan told the British Psychological Society's conference yesterday. "If your body is changing rapidly, your brain needs to update this information. It appears there is a time lag for adolescent boys, which causes them to be clumsy."

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# Glum lives begin with early birth

CHILDREN WHO are born prematurely are less likely to grow up happy and may have social problems in later life, according to new research.

Dr Elizabeth Hoy of Queen's University, Belfast, told the British Psychological Society yesterday that toddlers born with very low birth weight were less likely to smile or laugh and were emotionally impaired when compared with other children.

"These children spent more of their time showing no emotion at all. They were emotionally flat," she said.

Dr Hoy said that the emotional dampening was not caused by physical damage to the brain but by them being overloaded with stimuli in the early weeks of their lives. "Instead of being in the womb, where it is nice and quiet, they are thrust into the world very early, before they are able to cope. The highly stimulating

world of the neo-natal care units is a world full of monitors, lights and procedures that prove painful," she said.

Although nurses do their best to lessen the pain for infants in intensive care units, the children are normally disturbed every 20 minutes.

Parents can help children who are born prematurely by encouraging them to express themselves in their own time.

"Parents are often anxious with premature children that they will not develop properly. They try to compensate by stimulating the child and this can frighten and overload the child." Dr Hoy told the society's conference in Belfast. She said some mothers were very good at listening patiently to children and pushing them gently in the right

direction, but that others tended to over-stimulate them in an attempt to elicit a reaction. "It is very difficult for parents - especially if they have previously lost a child, possibly a twin - and they will want to compensate for the pain their child has undergone.

"But over-compensation is not the answer. The parents need to learn to be patient and quiet and allow their children to display emotion when the time is right."

The study was conducted on 52 toddlers who were conceived at about the same time. Those in the premature group were, on average, 21 months old and their social behaviour was compared with 18-month-olds who were born at the normal birth weight. The premature babies had an average birth weight of under 1kg (2lb 3oz).

All the mothers came from a similar social background and

the number of other children in the house was taken into account. The researchers videoed the children playing and assessed the levels of sociability, smiling, laughter and activity.

"The picture was one of less emotional intensity. The low birth weight children gave fewer, shorter smiles and laughs than the other children," said Dr Hoy.

Research conducted in the United States has shown that creating a calmer environment in neo-natal intensive care improves the social behaviour of these premature babies.

The study confirms previous work conducted by Dr Hoy that showed that seven-year-olds thought their classmates who had been born prematurely were sad and unhappy.

Teachers also reported that these children were quieter and more withdrawn.

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# Curious case of the high-flying Tory treasurer and the sinking ships

BY FRAN ABRAMS,  
STEVE BOGGAN  
AND ANDREW MULLINS

HE'S a multi-millionaire, treasurer of the Tory party, a City takeover expert, tax exile, ambassador to the United Nations, and friend of the Thatchers - Michael Ashcroft's cv is impressive.

But as he launches another takeover battle in the City - having shunned the Square Mile for more than a decade - it has emerged that Britain's 24th richest man also controls the "flag of convenience" of the central American state of Belize, which has one of the world's worst safety records.

Almost half the central American country's vessels - few of which have any real connection with the country - were detained because of safety defects between 1994 and 1996; only Honduras had a worse record.

Last year five sailors on a Belize-registered ship, the Rema, died of whisky, North Yorkshire, when their ship sank after being detained by coastguards because it was not safe.

Mr Ashcroft's company has operational control of a 50 per cent stake in the Belize shipping register, an official government body responsible for maintaining safety standards in the merchant fleet.

Mr Ashcroft, aged 52, holds both British and Belize nationality; is Belize's ambassador to the UN. A tax exile who lives in Florida, he keeps most of his £500m fortune offshore and is not registered to vote at the Belgrave home he maintains in this country. The six-storey house is now on the market with a price tag of almost £3m.

William Hague is under pressure to sack his party's treasurer. Labour has attacked Mr Ashcroft, who has made large donations to the Conservative Party, over his control of the flag of convenience and is also urging Mr Hague to refer his funding of the party to Lord Neil's committee on standards in public life.

Born in Chichester, West Sussex, in 1946, he can stay only



Michael Ashcroft: 'Brilliant, but ruthless' ITN/Reuter

90 days each year in Britain, yet is bankrolling its main opposition party with it is said, an eye on knighthood.

Peter Bradley, Labour MP for The Wrekin, has written to the Tory leader asking why the party is accepting money from Mr Ashcroft when the Neil committee recommended that political parties should not accept overseas donations.

Belize has yet to sign a UN Convention passed in 1966, which calls for a genuine connection between ships and their flag states and which demands that countries ensure their ships are safe.

David Cockroft, general secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, described the Belize register as a "sleazy" operation: "It is one of the select few registers in the shipping industry which

will register anybody. It exists for no other function whatever except to make money and is used only by ship owners who have no reputation to lose."

Mr Ashcroft is publicly shy but, in a statement, his office said reports that he gave or lent up to £1m to the Conservatives were "extremely exaggerated". The shipping register was a "passive interest" in which he had no direct involvement, and the number of deaths was very low, at about one a year on average.

He has just launched a £262m takeover bid for Corporate Services Group, a play which, in true Ashcroft style, is also complex, controversial and meeting hostility.

The City never liked Mr Ashcroft's brand of slick deals and fast fortunes in the Eighties, and it became even more

wary when he relocated his business in 1984 - overnight and in complete secrecy - in the tax haven of Bermuda.

He seems to enjoy tax havens. His influence in Belize is immense. Last summer, he helped to find the right-wing People's United Party (PUP), which comfortably saw off the main opposition, the United Democratic Party (UDP), in an election awash with cash and favours.

The champagne corks had barely stopped popping at the PUP's headquarters when Mr Ashcroft joked about the amount of cash he had pumped into the party: "If I'd have known they were going to win by so much, I'd have saved myself some money," he is reported to have remarked.

In Belize, there is a sense of *deja vu*. "Before the PUP came into power the last time, in 1989, Mr Ashcroft was concerned that they opposed him and he felt it important that he should have a dialogue with them," said Manuel Esquivel, the former UDP prime minister. "Since then, he is rumoured to have given them at least \$1m (£640,000) and now he yields enormous influence."

Mr Ashcroft was attracted by Belize's potential as an offshore tax haven - he bought its main bank, made generous political donations, drew up legislation for the government to adopt, bought 25 per cent of its telecommunications company, 20 per cent of one of its citrus fruit producers, and was made Belize's UN ambassador.

His links with the tiny country of Belize - population 230,000 - go back to his childhood when his father, Frederick, had a post with the colonial service.

Mr Ashcroft started his business career with Carreras, part of the Rothman group, as a trainee manager. After two years of boredom, he left at 26 and started a small cleaning business, which he sold to Reckitt and Colman for £1m just four years later. That, however, was not enough for a man who lives for the deal.

In 1977, he bought Hawley Gondall, a small tent-making

company that diversified wildly through acquisitions, and set him on the road to his many millions, which climaxed two decades later when, in 1997, he sold his main company ADT, the security and motor auctions group, to Tyco International, a US company, for about £2.5bn. Mr Ashcroft's share was £154m and he still retains a half per cent interest in Tyco, worth £195m.

He also owns 66 per cent of BHJ Corporation (Belize Holdings Inc), the holding company for the Bank of Belize. In November 1998 his BHJ stock was worth £170m and his share of Carlisle Holdings, a Guernsey-based property and acquisitions group, is worth £120m.

Former colleagues describe him as brilliant but ruthless. "He is cruel and he seems to get sadistic pleasure from beating the other guy to the deal," said one former executive. "He is driven not so much by the money, as the skill it takes to get it." He also has the rather odd hobby of collecting Victoria Crosses - he is said to have more than 100.

His relationship with the Conservatives has been dogged by the same kind of snobbery that drove him from the City. In spite of agreeing to underwrite up to half of the party's £1.6m debt before the last election, he has not been universally welcomed by party members.

"You only have to look at his rollercoaster business dealings. He is not an altruistic person, he is a person who pursues power. That worries many of us," said one party grandee.

Mr Ashcroft maintains an office in the Conservative Party's Smith Square headquarters and is said to have a strong influence over Mr Hague and the party chairman, Archie Norman.

Some party members and backbench MPs have privately expressed disquiet at Mr Ashcroft's central role in the party. Baron McAlpine of West Green, a former treasurer under Margaret Thatcher, blocked his appointment to the treasurer's job when he first sought it in 1990.



The idyll of Belize, where Mr Ashcroft wields enormous influence

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## Sell-by date plan for football kit

FOOTBALL CLUBS may be made to put sell-by dates on all the replica kits they sell.

The proposal is expected to come from the Football Task Force, which is gathering evidence in a long-running inquiry into the replica kits industry.

A task-force source confirmed yesterday that one recommendation under discussion was a sell-by date, identifying how long it would be before a strip was substituted with a new design. The replica England strip retails at £72 for an

adult's shirt, shorts and socks,

while a child's size costs £56. A new design was unveiled this week and will be launched on 23 April, but the maker, Umbro, would not say how much that kit will cost.

Other possible task-force recommendations include setting up a statutory football regulator with powers to restrict teams who produced too many kits, and placing a two-year minimum shelf life on all new kits.

Preston North End, a second division club, already tells fans the sell-by date of strips, saying it is "fairer" to do this.

The task force, led by David Mellor, the former Tory heritage secretary, has also looked at why kits sell with a mark-up

of up to 75 per cent. It is expected to report to Tony Banks, the sports minister, in May.

Meanwhile, the Office of Fair Trading said yesterday it had completed an inquiry into alleged price fixing for replica kits of the Premiership clubs.

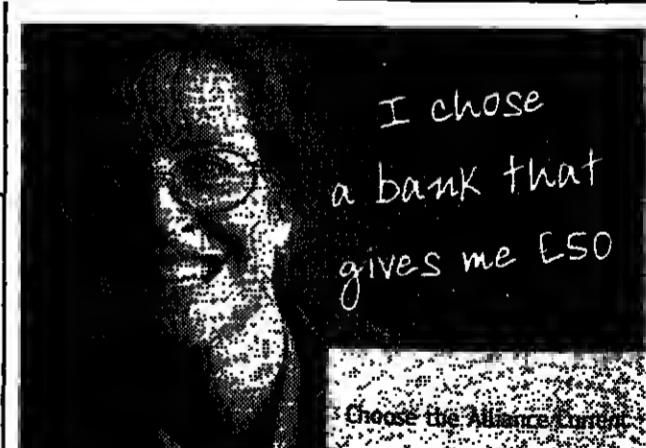
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Farmer over rig

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IN THE WEEKEND



Fred Barker, the owner of Lushill Farm, Wiltshire, where a field trial of GM crops is taking place

Geoff Pugh

## Teachers to sue over false claims

TEACHERS DEMANDED new safeguards yesterday to protect the "forgotten army" of thousands of staff whose careers were destroyed by false and malicious allegations of physical and sexual abuse by pupils.

The second largest teaching union, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, called for staff accused of abusing pupils to be granted anonymity and said children who made allegations should be suspended immediately and expelled if the claims proved to be malicious.

Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said nearly 1,000 of its members had faced allegations of abuse over the past eight years, but across the profession the figure could be three times as large. Three-quarters of the claims were dismissed out of hand and only a tiny number eventually resulted in conviction.

But he said many staff cleared of wrongdoing suffered wrecked careers and ruined lives. Few could return to school even after being proved innocent and many never worked again, he said. Three union members had committed suicide after facing allegations.

Delegates at the union's annual conference in Eastbourne unanimously backed a call for reform and detailed a catalogue of cases in which malicious allegations had been made against their colleagues.

Mr de Gruchy said the number of false claims was increasing and called for stern action against pupils who invented stories of abuse by staff.

He said: "I think it's a very serious case which should normally result in expulsion. Rather like physical assault on other kids or teachers, they have to pay the price and that price is expulsion." He criticised Estelle Morris, the School Standards minister, for failing to back moves to grant

BY BEN RUSSELL  
Education Correspondent

anonymity to accused teachers. Mr de Gruchy said staff should enjoy similar protection to that granted to rape and sexual abuse victims. Teachers accused of abuse should not be named until convicted of a crime, he said.

Steve Luscombe, a delegate from London, said in one case a teacher was accused of touching a 15-year-old boy "in a way which could imply a certain sexual innuendo".

The teacher was cleared after investigation "but the pain, indignity and hurt was there. He said, 'I have done all these years in teaching and someone can throw this out at me.' Two terms later he resigned and he is no longer in teaching."

In another case, Mr Luscombe said, a young married junior school teacher suffered a nervous breakdown after being cleared of touching a girl pupil.

Mr Luscombe said: "First day back, the parents waited to collect their children. The hub of the parents went silent. Parents withdrew children from school. One said, 'My child is not going swimming with Mr So-and-so.'

"A nervous breakdown followed. He could not face it any more and he threw in his resignation. Financial crisis: he could not pay his mortgage. The family was in turmoil; what a trail of sadness." The teacher and his wife later needed medical treatment for depression, he said.

The Government announced the first 21 of its Sure Start projects yesterday to provide children with a better start in life. The projects, directed at disadvantaged areas, offer parents advice and support on health, education and child development.

The first are expected to start in early summer.

## Farmer risks jail over right of way

BY PAUL WATSON

A FARMER who refuses to accept there is a public footpath on his land was told yesterday by a judge to allow ramblers access - or spend 14 days in jail.

The warning was given at Middlesbrough County Court by Judge David Bryant to Stan Bell, 76, whose family bought North Farm Hartlepool, Cleveland in 1946, maintains that there is no public right of way on his land.

A 1983 public inquiry ruled the footpath legal but Mr Bell has appeared in court three

times since then for obstructing the path. Hartlepool Borough Council obtained a court injunction in January, ordering Mr Bell to remove obstructions. After he still refused, Judge Bryant told him: "You can remove these obstructions and make sure people can walk along this footpath. If they can you will not go to prison, but if they cannot you will go to prison for 14 days." The hearing was adjourned until 28 May.

FERGAL KEANE

'Clinton bloody crazy,  
Milosevic bloody crazy,  
Everybody crazy'

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 3

# GM crop trial will stay despite error

THE GOVERNMENT refused yesterday to stop the first field-scale trial of genetically modified (GM) crops, although the planting broke its own rules for notification.

Seeds planted over the Easter weekend at Lushill Farm in Hannington, near Swindon, Wiltshire, will be allowed to grow, despite people in the area not being informed by a notice in their local paper that the trial would be made.

Under the rules of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DET), any company intending to grow GM organisms outdoors must place a notice in a paper serving the local area.

On the Today programme yesterday Michael Meacher, the Environment minister, insisted that the Gloucestershire Echo - where an advert about the planned planting appeared on March 9 - did cover the area.

BY CHARLES ARTHUR  
Technology Editor

and stop these farm-scale trials until the correct procedures have been followed."

Four such trials are expected to assess the environmental impact of growing GM herbicide-resistant rape and maize. Another trial will begin near Shirburn, Oxfordshire, later this month.

Desmond D'Souza, biotechnology director at Agri-Evo, said his company acted in good faith when it advertised in the Echo and the company was re-advertising in the Swindon Evening Advertiser in the interests of "openness and transparency". The first advert appeared yesterday.

"We do not accept that we have breached the laws," he added. "We advertised in good faith in what we believed to be the right paper. The laws state that we must advertise in a local paper within 10 days of consent being applied for from the De-

partment of Environment, Transport and the Regions to go ahead. We did this. We do not accept that we advertised in the wrong publication."

"We will not be harvesting until some time after July. The public still have every opportunity to register objections."

The DETR wants to institute field-scale trials of GM crops as a means of slowing their commercial introduction, thus appeasing pressure groups, while providing a path to their wider use, thus satisfying the companies.

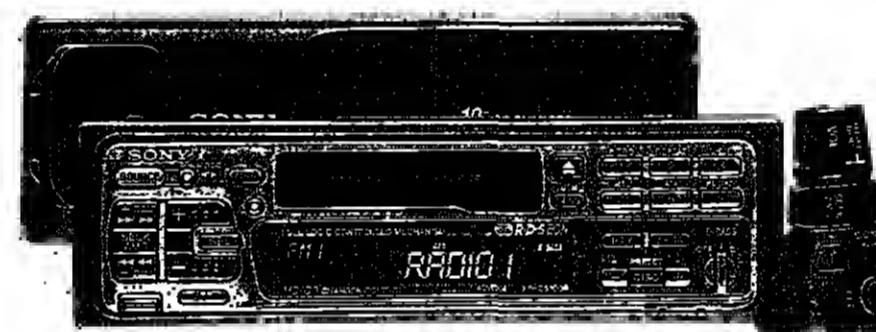
The Cooperative Wholesale Society, the UK's largest farming organisation, has refused to take part in trials.

Thousands of people are expected to march in London today to call on the Government to ban GM food. The protest, organised by GMO Campaign, starts in Hyde Park at 1.30pm and ends at Trafalgar Square.

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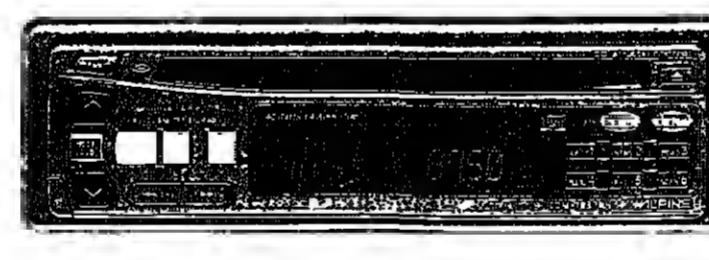
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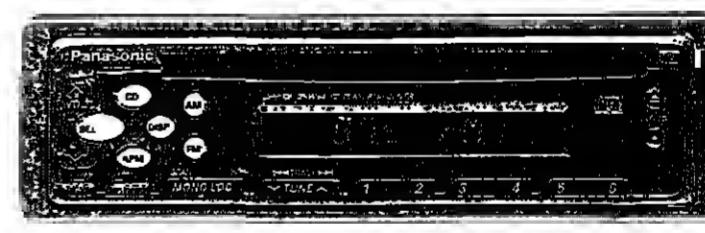
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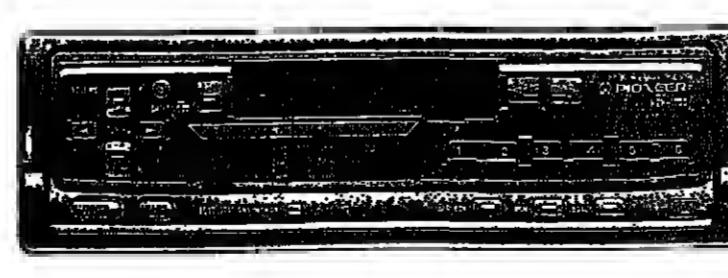
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# Last-ditch summit on Ulster arms

NORTHERN IRELAND parties and British and Irish government officials will spend this weekend making final preparations for what promises to be the mother of all negotiating sessions, beginning in Belfast on Tuesday.

Talks are scheduled to resume on that date in an attempt to secure a final settlement of the arms decommissioning issue, in the hope that agreement will lead to the speedy formation of a new Northern Ireland cross-community government.

It was confirmed yesterday that members of the Balcombe Street gang, an IRA unit responsible for multiple killings in England in the 1970s, are being released from prison in the Irish Republic. Four members of the gang have already been freed, and will be formally discharged from prison next week.

With most attention focused

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK  
Ireland Correspondent

on the question of whether the IRA and Sinn Fein will agree to the stipulation that some arms should be "put beyond use", the authorities may be hoping that such moves will help to improve the atmosphere in republican circles.

Gang members have been among the longest-serving republican prisoners, spending 24 years behind bars. Most of their term was served in English jails until their recent transfers to the Irish Republic.

The four men were sentenced to a total of 47 terms of life imprisonment for a number of murders and other offences, with further sentences totalling more than 2,000 years.

In republican circles the men are viewed as strong supporters of the peace process. Their controversial appear-

ance at a Sinn Fein conference a year ago helped to secure an overwhelming vote in favour of republican entry into a Northern Ireland administration.

Next week's talks are seen as possibly the last serious obstacle to the formation of that administration, as all sides grapple with the decommissioning issue.

Although most of the pressure is on the republicans to put arms beyond use, there are also signs of strain within David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party.

Two of his assembly backbenchers have indicated their unhappiness with the draft declaration that emerged from the last session of talks at Hillsborough Castle near Belfast.

Sinn Fein has since said that it regards the draft declaration as unacceptable, and will be seeking to make radical changes to it. Martin McGuinness,



Patrons drinking in the Wharf Street pub in Leeds, which has been designed by women for women. *Guzelian*

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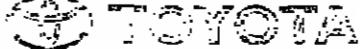
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## Ladies call time on lads' pubs

BY ESTHER LEACH

zines is a nice idea," said Sarah Coyne, 26, a project controller with a finance company. "If you're on your own you could flip through a mag and not feel awkward."

How does the landlord, Jason Argyle, 29, welcome a woman on her own?

"By making her feel she's not on her own but part of the party. The trick is not to make her feel different because she is alone. How do that is our little secret."

But there is no intention to ignore men, says Allied Domecq. "Pubs can be intimidating places for women but we have tried to design out the elements which traditionally put them off."

"We wanted to offer women a pub environment in which they felt welcome, comfortable and above all safe."

"The windows are bigger than in most pubs so people can see what's going on inside, the lighting is very good, there is waiter service so women don't have to join the scrum at the bar and there are decent toilets."

"The place is bright and open, the decor warm and friendly. There are chairs with backs so people feel they are protected - and the staff have been trained to make everyone feel welcome."

Christopher Bates, a 20-year-old geography student, had just one complaint.

"The waiter service makes a difference," he said, "but one of the best ways of meeting a woman is rubbing shoulders when you're ordering drinks at the bar."

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university window overlooking Weimar, the German city that saw the birth of the Bauhaus 80 years ago EPA

## Bodyguard kills Niger President

BY RICHARD HUGHES



Mainassara: Shot dead

NIGER'S PRESIDENT, Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, was assassinated yesterday in an apparent coup attempt in the West African country.

A correspondent for Radio France Internationale, reporting from Niger's capital, Niamey, said that the president's body had been taken to a clinic in the city after he was fired upon by soldiers at the airport. The Prime Minister, Ibrahim Hassane Mayaki, later confirmed that the President had been killed in an "unfortunate incident". A Western diplomat said the President had been shot by one of his own presidential bodyguards. He did not give details.

In the capital itself, troops with tanks had moved into the streets blocking access to the presidential palace and other key locations, witnesses said.

Several Nigerian diplomats and businessmen in neighbouring Burkina Faso said that they had been told by government colleagues in Niamey that the takeover attempt began shortly after sunrise. A Reuters correspondent in Niamey said state radio was off the air but the broadcasting house was guarded by troops loyal to the President.

Witnesses said that the mu-

political tension over chaotic elections in February.

The assassination follows opposition calls for Mainassara to resign after the annulment of regional elections held earlier this week.

There were unconfirmed reports of attacks on vote counters and on Wednesday the Supreme Court annulled the elections and ordered a new round of voting. Opposition politicians had claimed they were winning the elections and accused the government of inciting the violence.

Mainassara, a former army colonel, seized power in January 1996, ousting the country's first democratically elected government. He placed the president, Mahamane Ousmane, under house arrest but released him three months later. Mainassara said he had staged the coup because Mr Ousmane had failed to address the economic and political problems of what is one of the world's poorest nations.

Early last year Mainassara's government quelled several army uprisings and mutinies. Two opposition politicians, including the former prime minister, and five commanders were arrested for allegedly plotting to kill the president.

There was no immediate explanation for the attempted coup, but it appears to be the climax of a week of mounting

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# Hans hands over hams to pay debt

AMID THE slaughter and confusion of the battle of Normandy, it was a trivial enough episode: the kind of incident that most people would have forgotten decades ago.

A starving 19-year-old German soldier, retreating before the D-Day invasion force, stole a ham from a farmer's wife.

Hans Kupperfahrenberg could never forget what he had done. Haunted by guilt, he went back to Normandy last August to search for the farm. He brought a large ham with him in the boot of his car.

After more than half a century, his memory failed him. Despite help from local people, he could not find the farmhouse. Eventually, he presented the hunk of meat to an old people's home, before making an eloquent little speech about Franco-German friendship and the cruelty of war. "Please remember that not all German soldiers were bad men," he said.

An article in the local newspaper reported his failed act of contrition and stirred faint memories. The correct farm was identified but only after Hans had returned to Germany.

On Monday afternoon, Mr Kupperfahrenberg, 74, will be back in the rolling countryside south-east of Caen where he almost starved to death 55 years ago. The farmer's wife

from whom he stole the ham is still living, although she has only the vaguest recollection of the incident. He will present her with not one ham but two: an Italian parma ham and half a German Schwarzwälder schinken or Black Forest ham.

"They symbolise a united Europe," Hans said, chuckling during a telephone interview from his home in Essen.

Mr Kupperfahrenberg was a trooper in the 21st Panzer Division, retreating before Allied troops who were breaking out from Caen in July 1944. He and a dozen other men, who had not eaten for two days, took refuge in a farm house near Argences. The farmer's wife plied them and gave them eggs and milk, even though she had little food of her own.

As the soldiers cooked the eggs, the chimney caught fire and a flaming sack fell out of the hearth. It contained a smoked ham, which had been hidden in the chimney. "We ate the lot. It was like a big party in its own way. I've never forgotten that moment. For me it wasn't a trivial thing even though people tell me, 'Worse things happened in the war,'" Mr Kupperfahrenberg said. "I felt really awful about it. I can't call it a small

thing. It is not easy to go back, but the farmer's wife was willing to meet me and so I agreed to go."

Soon after he stole the ham, Hans was injured in the chest by a grenade. He was invalided back to Germany but sent to fight in Italy the following year.

After the war, Hans worked for the German state railways as a manager.

His experience in Normandy marked him for life. In memory of all the young comrades he had lost, he threw himself into youth work. In memory of his own brush with starvation, he raised more than a million German marks (£200,000) for poor and hungry old people and children in Africa.

And he never forgot the ham.



Allies advancing on Caen

At a ceremony at the Argences town hall on Monday afternoon, Mr Kupperfahrenberg handed over his hams to Marie-Louise Marie, who is now 84. With her will be her husband, Armand, who was a prisoner of war in Germany when Hans and his comrades were stealing her ham.

What will he say to Ms Marie? "I will say 'Sorry, but I was only a boy and there was no other choice but to fight during the Hitler dictatorship'."

Ms Marie seemed a little bewildered by the entire event, when contacted by phone. "Really I can't remember much of what happened at that time," she said. "It was all a long time ago. But if he says he took the ham, then I suppose he did. If he wants to give me another one, well, that is fine."

Mr Kupperfahrenberg believes Monday's ceremony will be all the more poignant because of the present conflict in the Balkans. "Between French and German people today, there are no problems," he said.

"I believe that a united Europe is a very good thing indeed. I would like Western Europe to set an example to the rest of the world, for example in the current governments in the Balkans. Western Europe was once so divided, and so much blood was shed, but now it is united and peaceful."

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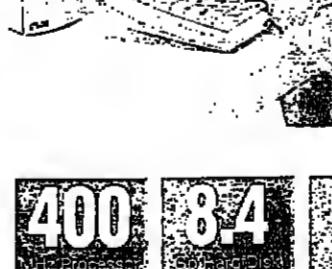
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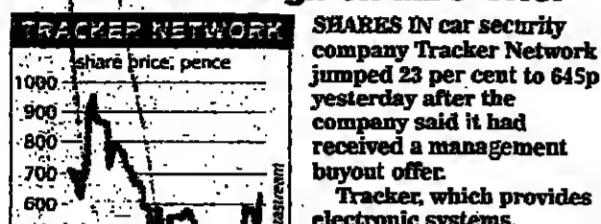
## BUSINESS

## BRIEFING

**NatPower welcomes Byers ruling**

NATIONAL POWER yesterday welcomed the Government's decision not to refer its purchase of Midlands Electricity's supply business to the Competition Commission provided suitable undertakings, including the sale of its 4GW coal-fired power station at Drax, were obtained. Although the director general of energy supply recommended National Power dispose of some 5.5-6 GW capacity, Stephen Byers, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, ruled that the disposal of the Drax plant, which National Power has put up for sale, would help to reduce its influence in the generation market enough. National Power's shares yesterday closed up 5p at 485.5p.

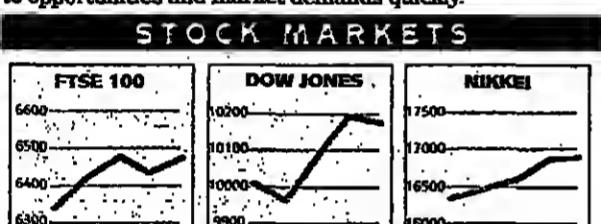
**Tracker rides high on MBO offer**

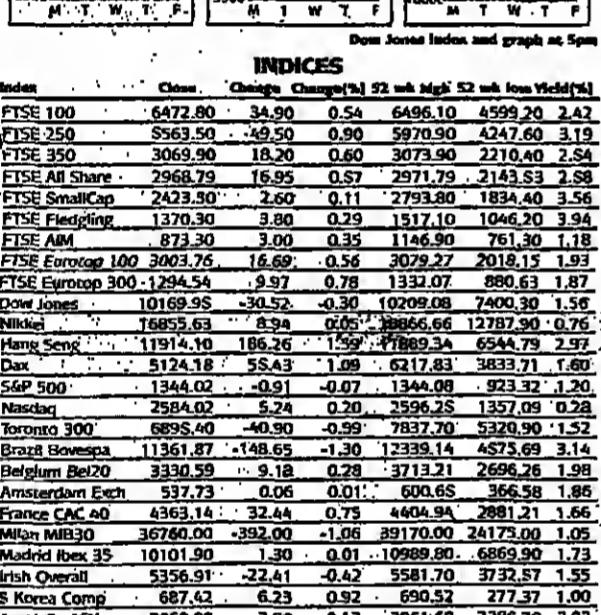
**TRACKER NETWORK**  

 SHARES IN car security company Tracker Network jumped 23 per cent to 645p yesterday after the company said it had received a management buyout offer.

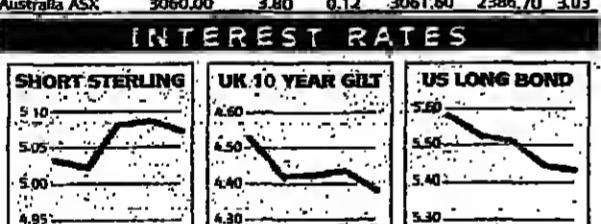
Tracker, which provides electronic systems allowing vehicles to be traced if they are stolen, said it had received an indicative offer of 670p a share, valuing the company at around £37m.

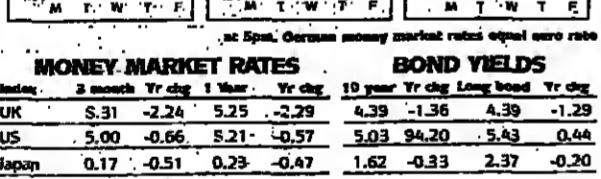
**Avonside looks at private benefits**  
 AVONSIDE YESTERDAY joined the growing list of smaller companies turning private, announcing it had agreed a 22.38m, 55p a share cash bid from Novaside, a company set up by Craig Slater, one of its directors, and venture capitalists Alchemy Partners. Novaside said it had received irrevocable undertakings in respect of 0.30 per cent of the capital to accept the offer, which represents a premium of 37.5 per cent to Avonside's share price the day before it confirmed that it had been approached.

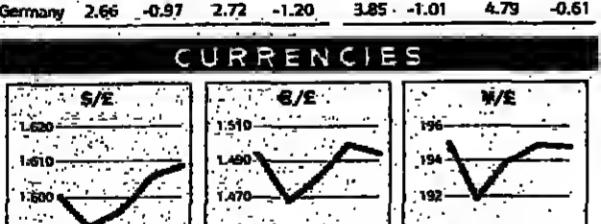
Both sides said the privatisation would remove the financial, managerial and regulatory burdens of being a listed company and enhance Avonside's ability to respond to opportunities and market demands quickly.

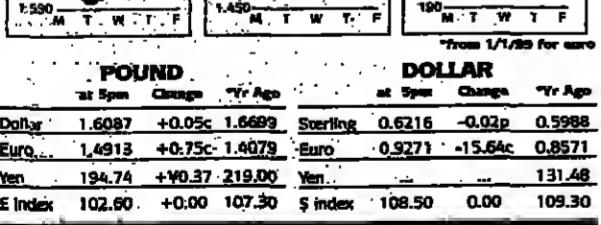
**STOCK MARKETS**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

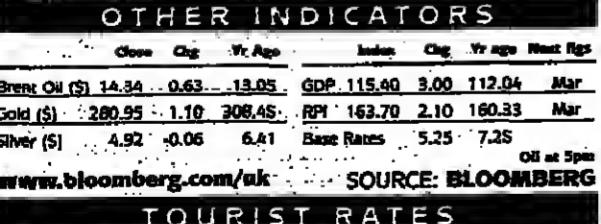
**INDICES**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**INTEREST RATES**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**MONEY MARKET RATES**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**CURRENCIES**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**OTHER INDICATORS**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**TOURIST RATES**  

 Dow Jones Index and graph at 5pm

**Rates for indication purposes only**  
 Source: Thomas Cook

# Barclaycard forced to cut rates as market share falls

BY ANDREW VERTI

BARCLAYCARD, the UK's biggest credit-card provider, is cutting its main interest rate to under 20 per cent for the first time in a move that reflects the increasing damage inflicted on its business by low-cost competitors.

The wholly-owned subsidiary of the Barclays group said it would cut its headline annual rate of interest to 19.9 per cent, a 3 per cent drop from its level six months ago.

The company is also launching a package of added benefits, including savings of up to 30 per cent on home phone calls, and a free extended warranty for household appliances bought with its card. It is also launching a Platinum card offering enhanced benefits for high earning customers.

The move drew immediate attacks from its competitors,

HOW CREDIT CARD RATES COMPARE								
	Barclaycard	NatWest	Midland	Lloyds	MBNA	Goldfish	RBS Advanta	Alliance & Leicester
APR purchases %	16.9-19.9	21.4	21.5	16.8-22.2	19.9	19.8	17.9	17.4
Hidden charges	n/a	£10	n/a	£10	£15	£12	£10	£12
Late Payment	n/a	£10	n/a	£10	£15	£12	£10	£12
Exceeding limit	n/a	£15	n/a	£10	£15	£12	£10	£12
Unpaid direct debit	n/a	£5	£5	£5	£15	£12	£10	£8

Source: Barclaycard/Moneyfacts/Competitor literature 31.3.99

which have continually savaged Barclaycard for making excessive profits and charging an annual interest rate of more than 22 per cent.

Low-cost competitors, many of them new entrants to the market from the United States, have succeeded in capturing an increasing share of the booming market by offering interest rates of a fraction of Barclaycard's. Competitors such as Capital One, a US credit-card is-

suer, are now offering rates as low as 11.9 per cent. Rivals such as RBS Advanta, a joint venture between Royal Bank of Scotland and the credit-card issuer Advanta, are also luring customers away. They offer to take on Barclaycard debts at a starting rate of just 6.9 per cent.

The move represents a dramatic reversal of strategy for Barclaycard. Until recently its managers have resisted cutting rates, arguing that customers

would be attracted by added extras such as warranties.

In the City the strategy is widely perceived to have failed. Barclaycard's market share, which stood at 32 per cent two years ago, has now shrunk to around 28 per cent.

The company has still grown its business because the market for cards is expanding by 15 to 20 per cent a year. But last September it announced it was slashing 1,100 jobs, out of a staff

of 5,000, because of new technology and the need to cut costs.

John Eaton, managing director of Barclaycard, said: "I would accept the point that people have challenged us on value. I don't generally believe businesses should build their strategies around market share alone, but we did of course take that into account. We are not going to be seen in the same light as the other traditional

banks." He said the bank was also cutting out hidden charges such as penalties for late payment and exceeding card credit limits.

The City yesterday said the move had been forced on Barclaycard by the competition. Ingo Edberg, a senior analyst at WestLB Panmure, said: "This is purely a defensive move. And ultimately the profitability of Barclaycard will fall, as it should do because it is far too profitable."

Competitors were quick to strike back. Mark Austin, marketing manager of RBS Advanta, said: "While we welcome Barclaycard's attempt to keep pace with other issuers by chipping away at their rate, consumers shouldn't have to wait millions to still reduce their bill by around two thirds, simply by switching cards."

Outlook, page 19

## String of closures leads to loss of 3,000 jobs

BY NIGEL COPE

Associate City Editor

BRITAIN'S RISING jobless total was placed under further pressure yesterday with a string of factory and office closures that will lead to 3,000 redundancies.

Kvaerner, the Norwegian construction group, led the way, with reports that it is planning to restructure its UK operations with the possible loss of 2,000 jobs at its shipyards in Scotland. The company has called a news conference on Tuesday to unveil a new strategy and structure, but Kvaerner refused to say whether this includes job cuts.

Elsewhere there was a new setback for Britain's mining industry when RJB Mining announced plans to close its colliery in Calverton, Nottinghamshire, with the loss of 300 jobs. RJB said the higher costs associated with accessing new coal seams were responsible for the decision, with "ongoing operations no longer viable". Production will cease next week, with only



Colin Richardson, one of 300 Calverton miners told yesterday of the loss of their jobs

Kiran Ridley/Page One

about 40 men kept on to secure underground areas and recover equipment. The miners will receive three months' redundancy money plus payments based on length of service.

Calverton was closed by British Coal in 1993 and reopened by RJB the year after. The company said it had considered a substantial invest-

ment in accessing a deeper seam with 20 million tonnes of recoverable coal, but the reserves have a higher sulphur content for which there is no market.

Arjo Wiggins Appleton, the paper group, is closing its Cardif plant with the loss of 460 jobs. Arjo is restructuring its carbonless and thermal papers

operations and terminating thermal production in Europe. With the closure of the Cardiff carbonless plant, the manufacture of these products will be concentrated at Fort William in Scotland and Darford, Kent, as well as at two plants in Belgium. A plant in France is also closing down.

At Sainsbury's, the super-

market group described as "speculation" reports that it plans to close its Savacentre head office with the loss of 300 jobs.

The company has been reviewing the Savacentre business and said it would inform staff at the office in Wokingham, Berkshire, of the outcome on Monday.

## No board bust-up, insists Reg Vardy

BY NIGEL COPE

REG VARDY, the Sunderland-based car dealer, denied there had been a boardroom bust-up yesterday as it announced the resignation of chief executive, Graeme Potts.

The company said Mr Potts, 41, was leaving to take up a position in the car industry and that his departure was "entirely amicable". However, he will be eligible for compensation for loss of office under the terms of his 12-month contract, which last year paid him £290,000.

"There is no question of a bust-up," Mr Peter Vardy, the chairman, said. "I have known Graeme for years and I wish he'd stay forever. But he has been here 15 years and feels it is time to move on."

The company has courted

## Football shares slide as Sky is kicked into touch

BY ANDREW GARFIELD

Financial Editor

SHARES IN Britain's larger quoted football clubs fell sharply yesterday after the Government blocked British Sky Broadcasting's £223m takeover of Manchester United and referred cable operator NTL's bid for Newcastle United to the new Competition Commission.

Analysts said the two decisions appeared to rule out any further bids by media groups for UK clubs, removing the takeover speculation that has buoyed the sector since Sky's bid was unveiled in March.

As well as Manchester United, which fell 32.5p to 186p, and Newcastle United, which was down 9.5p to 76p, Aston Villa - which may have expected a bid from Carlton if the Manchester United bid had gone through - also saw its shares fall

to 47.5p to 51.5p. Tottenham Hotspur, whose chairman Alan Sugar has rebuffed several approaches from Eric, the Joe Lewis-backed leisure group, fell 3p to 76p, while Leeds Sporting fell 2p to 20p. Shares in smaller clubs, seen as less likely to be taken over by media interests, were less badly hit.

Nottingham Forest, struggling to avoid relegation, rose 1p to 25p, while Loftus Road, owner of Fulham, was static at 9p.

Tony Frater, who manages the Singer & Friedlander football fund, one of few City vehicles for football club investors, said the City clearly thought yesterday's decisions had put paid to hopes of a bid

frenzy in the football sector. However, he said in the longer run, by blocking Sky the Government may have inadvertently opened the way to a higher bid by a continental European club, which might find harder to oppose. France's Canal Plus owns Paris Saint-Germain, while Mediaset, Silvio Berlusconi's television empire, owns FC Milan.

"If Mediaset were to bid for United, there would be nothing to stop Sky bidding for Mediaset. The EU has not shown any inclination to stop media companies taking over football clubs. I don't regard this as bad news. Murdoch was getting United without any competition. I have no doubt there will be another bid," said Mr Frater.

Outlook, page 19

## AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

## LONDON

THE FTSE 100 finished just below its closing high but set another trading high. The index topped 6,500 for the first time; it ended 34.9 up at 6,472.8. Supporting shares were also ahead.

Thursday's base-rate cuts helped interest-sensitive shares such as retailers and property. Kingfisher moved to a new high, gaining 38.6p to 890p, and Land Securities rose 24.5p to 840p. Strong figures from Sun Life & Provincial boosted insurance.

Derek Pain, page 19

## NEW YORK

BLUE CHIPS sank as profit-taking set in after three record-breaking sessions this week. The Dow average was down 53 points to 10,144 in the early afternoon. "It is Friday, so maybe they are cashing in," said Larry Wachtel at Prudential Securities.

Analysts said stocks received an early boost from news that US wholesale prices rose by just 0.2 per cent in March despite higher oil prices. But this was not sufficient to quell the bout of profit-taking.

## TOKYO

THE NIKKEI 225 closed flat as investors took profits after it surged past 17,000 in the morning for the first time since 30 March last year, traders said. At the close, the Nikkei was 8.94 points, 0.05 per cent, up at 16,855.6. June Nikkei futures stood 70 points higher at 16,850.

The index leapt above 17,000 after a record close in New York fuelled hopes of a global rally, and as sharp interest-rate cuts in the euro zone led to talk that investors would look to shift funds to Japan.

## HONG KONG

THE HANG SENG Index closed up 188.26



# Football and business don't mix



## OUTLOOK

**THE FINDINGS** of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission against BSkyB are so unequivocal that it seems hard to believe any merger between a broadcaster and a Premier League football club will now be allowed to go ahead. The Commission's principal concern was that Sky's takeover of Manchester United would adversely affect competition between broadcasters for TV rights. But to this, the Commission added a second, more general concern - that the merger would "damage the quality of British football" by reinforcing the division between larger, richer clubs and smaller, poorer ones.

The rights and wrongs of these conclusions are for others to debate. The effect, however, is significantly to reduce the commercial and investment potential of football. That there was ever anything to be had in this department was, perhaps, always something of an illusion.

As businesses, football clubs tend to be badly, sometimes corruptly managed organisations which neither abide by nor aspire to, the usual rules of publicly quoted companies. Often they struggle to make a profit, let alone a decent return. Because success on the pitch is regarded as

a greater priority than the quality of the accounts, any surplus funds tend invariably to be ploughed back into ever more expensive players.

It is often said that Sky's deal with the Premierships has transformed the finances of the game. The reality is that it has transformed the pockets of its leading players. With few exceptions, the financial strength of the clubs has hardly improved at all, despite Rupert Murdoch's money.

The upshot is that the great bulk of these companies are not worth what they sell for. Certainly, present valuations seem hard to justify if bids by broadcasters are now to be ruled out of court, confining these clubs to their cash starved, uncommercial

past. This applies not just to those clubs immediately affected by the rulings - Manchester United and Newcastle United - but to the broad mass of other quoted football clubs too. Unbundling the Premier League cartel, allowing clubs to sell TV rights individually, perhaps through pay-per-view, could help the game financially, but the benefit will again be confined largely to the top clubs.

Investors were chasing a mirage when they piled into these companies. The MMC has spelt this out in black and white. It is apparently perfectly right for broadcasters to own and generate their own content when it comes to news, drama and popular entertainment. But when it comes to sport, forget it. For sport, it seems, different rules apply. The same might be said about sport and stock market investment. The two of them just don't seem to mix.

### Credit cards

**YOUR STARTER FOR 10.** You have a choice of two credit cards: one, from Capital One Bank, levies a fee of 11.9 per cent APR on its accounts. The other, from Barclaycard, charges 19.9 per cent APR. Other-

wise there is little to differentiate the two, apart from the fact that one is better known than the other.

That, in a nutshell, is the problem faced by Barclaycard, which announced yesterday that it is cutting the rate it charges holders of its card by 1 per cent from its previously-exorbitant levels. The news, while no doubt welcome to Barclaycard's seven million customers, is unlikely to reverse the growing trend towards cheaper and more competitive issuers.

Whereas even a decade ago, Barclaycard's dominance of the market meant huge profits for its parent, Barclays Bank, the same no longer applies today.

Advances in technology make it easier for new entrants to deliver competitive products. In the past three or four years a clutch of new issuers, particularly from the US, have launched cards which charge as little as half the amount Barclaycard does.

In the past, Barclaycard could point to the fact that the vast majority of its cardholders, two-thirds or more, paid off their debts at the end of each month. They therefore incurred no charges, extortions or otherwise, and the meantime ben-

efited from Barclaycard's loyalty points system.

But times have changed. Surveys show that the proportion of cardholders who pay their debts off in full each month has dropped to 50 per cent. Up to a quarter carry their balance (another name for debt) indefinitely, making minimum payments and rolling over the rest. Users' increased willingness to manage rather than pay off their card debt means low-charging issuers are bound to become winners in the credit card war.

Barclaycard has applied all the usual tricks to inspire loyalty, but in the end the offer of a free toaster to those silly enough to run up debts of £3,000 on their credit card won't help much if such a debtor is paying £300 a year more than he or she needs to for the loan.

Moreover, whereas once upon a time a Barclaycard was one of the few means available to pay for something in a shop without cash, the same no longer applies today.

Debit cards which simply deduct the moneys from a bank account are now commonplace. Flexible mortgages, particularly those which come as part and parcel of a bank account, complete with credit card

linked to the prevailing mortgage rate, are growing in popularity.

The fragmentation of the credit market means greater competition and lower profits for everyone, including Barclaycard. Its inability to respond in time has already led to 1,500 redundancies for its staff in the past few months and a slump in market share. Yesterday's rate cut will do little to halt the erosion in Barclaycard's position. It was both too little and too late.

### Electra/3i

If there is one thing that can be safely predicted about 3i's bid for the rival venture capital trust Electra, it is that the outcome will be very close. With the proxies now flowing ahead of Thursday's EGM, advisers are preparing themselves for a rerun of the CalEnergy bid for Northern Electric, which was decided by a mere 2000 votes. Since 3i has made its offer conditional on Electra shareholders rejecting their management's alternative restructuring programme, the EGM will in effect decide the outcome of the bid.

Brian Larcombe, the 3i chief executive, has adopted a very high-risk strategy for 3i by refusing to come up with the knockout bid the market wanted to see. If he pulls it off, he will look very clever. But Electra shareholders should think long and hard before accepting his mix of cash and 3i shares.

Until the Inland Revenue booted Electra's defence earlier this week by ruling that the taxman was entitled to a share of Electra's planned £544m buyback, Michael Stoddard and his team seemed to have the better of the play.

Electra's shareholders would plainly have been best served if they had been offered a similar reconstruction plan at a much earlier stage. As it is, it had to be coaxed out of Mr Stoddard, under threat of a hostile bid. Even so, he has demonstrated considerable value locked up in Electra's portfolio of unquoted investments, and the scheme Electra is putting in place gives management all the incentive it needs to realise that value within a realistic timeframe.

Shareholders who reject bids and put their faith in promises from management to do better are frequently disappointed. But in this case, shareholders ought to vote yes to Electra's defence and say no to 3i.

# AstraZeneca gets a headache as Foothsie rolls on

## MARKET REPORT



### DEREK PAIN

IT'S BEEN a cold turkey week for AstraZeneca, the new Anglo-Swedish drugs giant. After riding on a high as the multi-billion pound merger was put to bed, the shares have suffered with investors snatching their profits.

They have fallen every day since the merged group arrived on Tuesday. Another 45p (after 82p) to 278p was clipped away yesterday, bringing the decline to more than 25p.

They say in the market that it is often better to travel than to arrive, and AstraZeneca's fall from its 3,037p peak would appear to support the traditional adage.

There are suggestions, so far unconfirmed, that much of the selling has come from Sweden where there was a high-profile campaign against the deal. But despite the ferocity of the opposition it attracted little support, with fewer than 4 per cent of Astra shareholders failing to back the merger.

The drugs giant's latest weakness occurred as Foothsie experienced a rollercoaster session, ending 34.9 points higher, however, having risen 4.5p despite a Westminster threat to block its takeover of Midlands.

National Power, however,

brightened up 3.5p to 486p despite a Westminster threat to block its takeover of Midlands.

The latest Monetary Policy Committee base-rate cut had little immediate impact, but the surprise European Central

SCOTIA, the drugs development group, rose 9.5p to 115p after it confirmed that founder and former chairman David Horrobin had sold most of his shareholding. His 11 per cent stake was largely placed early this month at around 102p a share. Mr Horrobin stepped down in 1997 and later led an attempt to unseat Robert Dow, ex-Roche, who replaced him as chief executive.

Bank half-point cut is likely to prompt the MPC, which had been expected to sit on its laurels, into further cuts.

Interest-sensitive shares were among the best performers. Among retailers Kingfisher, Great Universal Stores, Storehouse and Arcadia were strong. Next, the fashion chain, received additional support from a further share sale by Tiger Management, the US hedge fund. It disposed of 4.5 million shares, cutting its stake to just over 7 per cent; the share jumped 44.5p to 833.5p.

On the property pitch it was the turn of Land Securities, British Land and Burford to show their mettle.

The sudden burst of activity from Stephen Byers, the Trade and Industry Secretary, was the day's highlight. He penalised Manchester United shares, down 32.5p to 186p, by blocking the controversial takeover bid by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, little changed at 541p. Fellow Premiership com-

petitors Cadbury Schweppes melted 20.5p to 877p. The soft-drinks-to-sweat group weakened as opposition grew to the £1.85bn merger of its soft drinks side with Coca-Cola. The German cartel office is reported to be intent on blocking the deal and the Australian anti-trust commission has come out against it. There is also speculation that other countries, as well as the European Union, will oppose the merger on competition grounds.

In Australia the deal would lift Coca-Cola's share of the carbonated drinks market to 75 per cent.

Granada, the leisure group, achieved a new high, up 27p to 1,377p, following indications that

Dresdner Kleinwort Benson is adopting a more benevolent attitude towards the shares,

SEAO VOLUME: 1.1 billion  
SEAO TRADES: 37,808  
GILTS INDEX: n/a

Electricity unless it reduces generating capacity by the sale of the Drax plant and some supply agreements are changed.

Mr Byers also had FirstGroup, the transport company, scurrying for shelter after seeking comments on the modest £10.6m acquisition of a West Country bus and coach operator. Its shares fell 6p to 394.5p, ruffing Stagecoach, 2.75p down to 233.75p.

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DIRECTORS OF struggling scotch whisky distiller Burn Stewart are still toasting their shares. The price rose 2.5p to 15.75p as more boardroom buying was disclosed. Three directors appear to have picked up 200,000 shares; on Thursday director buying accounted for 60,000 shares. The money-lending whisky maker, hit by tight margins in supermarkets, has risen 5p since the world's largest cruise ship, the

Trackers Network, the vehicle security group, moved 120p (after 172.5p) ahead to 645p when the management indicated it would bid 670p a share. Goldsmiths, the jew-

ellers, was little changed at 186p after it emerged that a counter-bid to the management buyout was unlikely.

Eurosv Energy hardened to 19.5p as Siber Energy produced a share exchange offer; Siber fell 0.75p to 6.75p.

Investment group Mount-

cashel rose 10p to 61.5p; it has

8.4 per cent of Redstone Tele-

communications, which has said it is in bid talks.

ITG, which has an 8.7 per

cent Redstone stake, rose 15p to 367.5p. RJB Mining's decision to close its Calverton pit in Nottinghamshire left the shares little changed at 62p.

Middlesex, the metals group with interests in Russia, suffered the day's biggest percentage fall, down 25 per cent to just 0.56p.

Engineer Booth Industries fell 9p to 30p on a profits warning and WF Electrical was short-

circulated 107.5p to 485p after a

cautious trading statement.

SEAO VOLUME: 1.1 billion  
SEAO TRADES: 37,808  
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THERE WAS fresh evidence of strengthening demand in the consumer economy yesterday when P&O, the ferry and cruise group, reported a buoyant start to the year in its cruise business.

P&O's European cruises have also been virtually full, although the company said that there had been some cancellations from American passengers nervous of taking Mediterranean cruises during the Balkan crisis.

P&O's passenger berths days

- the standard measure of cruise line capacity - was 1.44 million for Princess Cruises and 359,150 on European-based P&O Cruises. The company said P&O Cruises UK also kept up its bookings, although capacity on the cruises increased only slightly.

Of P&O's 14 cruise liners, nine are US based and operate under the Princess brand. Three are based in the UK and one in Australia, which operates under the P&O name.

Analysts said the trading update was "extremely encouraging", leading several sector watchers to upgrade their stance on the stock. "It's

a good statement in every respect," said Alistair Gunn from Credit Lyonnais.

P&O announced last month

that it was to raise around £2bn from a disposals pro-

gramme that includes selling its property interests, floating its Bovic construction business and selling the Earl's Court Olympia exhibition centre.

Lord Sterling, the chairman, said the future of the group would be in cruises, ferries, ports and logistics.

At 31 December, the cruise division of the company accounted for almost one-third of the group's net operating assets.

"At the end of the day someone needs to spend time persuading individuals that they have a need to make more pension provision for themselves. If the cost of that is not built in to the pension, then there won't be any significant increase [in the number saving]."

As with other insurers, AXA Sun Life has also been taken aback by an intervention by the Financial Services Authority, the City's senior regulator.

The FSA has warned advi-

sors against selling expensive

pensions to customers who may later want to switch to a new stakeholder plan. The concern is that they may get poor value when they switch because charges will have eaten into early contributions.

AXA Sun Life fears this will

create a "pensions planning blight". Afraid of being accused

in future of mis-selling, financial

advisers would be deterred from

selling the products.

"There is a danger that people won't do anything now to save even when it's in their interests - just because the charges might be lower in two years' time," Mr Owen said.

Sun Life & Provincial shares

closed up 27p to 543.25p.

## IN BRIEF

### World oil stockpiles set to fall sharply after Opec agreement

WORLD OIL stockpiles are likely to shrink sharply as a result of the agreement among Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to curb supply, says the International Energy Agency. The IEA said that, assuming 85 per cent compliance, stockpiles would fall by \$30 million barrels by the end of the year. The oil price, which rose from below \$10 a barrel to over \$14.30 after the deal, strengthened further.

ICI sells German coatings business

ICI HAS agreed to sell its German-based original equipment specialty coatings business to PPG Industries. The business, which has annual sales of £10m, supplies coatings for large-scale commercial vehicle manufacturers mainly within Germany, as well as for rail car, military and industrial applications. The value of the deal is less than 1 per cent of ICI's gross assets. ICI will use proceeds to reduce debt.

WF Electrical buys Crean division

WF ELECTRICAL, the electrical products distributor, is to buy Irish-based James Crean's electrical division for £16m, it said yesterday. The companies to be sold are J&N Wade and Blackstone Holdings, which between them have 47 UK branches. Crean announced pre-tax losses for 1998 of £20.8m, including an exceptional charge of £27.3m, compared with a loss of £1.9m the previous year.

Euro satellite group shuns London

SOCIÉTÉ EUROPÉENNE des Satellites yesterday rejected the idea of a London stock listing but approved plans to

## 20/MANAGED FUNDS' PERFORMANCE



## 22/RUGBY UNION

Five Nations' Championship: Wales aim to ruin Grand Slam dreams of England in the tournament's final act at Wembley

# Catt has to shoulder responsibility

By CHRIS HEWETT

Rugby Union Correspondent

IT HAS not been the best of decades for Welsh self-confidence. Back in the early 1970s, Barry John viewed the annual Five Nations banting with England as a foregone conclusion - "You could always tell when we were playing them, because the touts couldn't get rid of their tickets," he once joked - and, as recently as the late 80s, Jonathan Davies took malicious pleasure in winding up sundry red rose battalions before making them choke on their old school ties. Now, in the last match of the last Five Nations in the last year of the century, the boot is on the other foot.

The way Graham Henry and Rob Howley tell it, this current English side is the rugby equivalent of Kryptonite; the Welsh coach credits Lawrence Dallaglio and company with a place in the world's top three, while his captain goes one better by calling them the best in the business. "If you're

waiting for me to criticise England and pick holes in the way they play you're wasting your time," said Henry in answer to a suggestion that he might be over-egging the admiration bit just a little. "They beat the world champions in December and should have beaten Australia the previous week. Doesn't that say something about the quality they possess?"

It certainly does, and it would be reasonable to suggest that, bad any two of Jeremy Guscott, Phil Glanville, Will Greenwood and Jonny Wilkinson been inhabiting the England midfield at Wembley tomorrow afternoon, the touts might have found themselves even more out of pocket than they were back in the heyday of King John. The fact that only Wilkinson can boast the full complement of serviceable limbs

rather alters the balance of the contest, however, to the extent that Wales sense a realistic chance of denying the Grand Slam favourites at the death.

To do so, they will need to pilfer 40 per cent of the ball - no

discover rather more about themselves tomorrow than they learned in their previous outings against France and Italy; Sinkinson, in particular, can expect some real heat from Neil Back, and if the ball-winning New Zealander fails to deliver amid the boots and bullets, his colleagues will spend an unpleasant afternoon peering into their own nether regions.

But confronted only by a huge swathe of English inexperience out wide - Steve Hanley and Barrie-Jon Mather are debutants while the cherubic Wilkinson has only six caps in his school satchel - the quality Red Dragon backs should ensure a handsome return on whatever possession their forwards produce. From Howley at scrum-half to Shane Howarth at full-back, the Welsh are richly endowed in the ideas department and increasingly adept at turning theory into practise.

Clive Woodward, the England

coach, talked up his own three-quarters with such enthusiasm yesterday that he made Henry sound positively chirish. "Hanley and Mather bring something extra to the team and I'm sure Wales fear our back division," he said. "I'm fielding the best available English team and I'm totally relaxed about it; we're certainly not going to play any differently and having won three from three in this championship, there is no reason why we shouldn't go in with genuine confidence in our ability to finish on a high."

But Woodward was forced to

concede that the injuries to Guscott and David Rees, the Sale wing, had deposited a whole truckload of extra responsibility on the less than reliable shoulders of Mike Catt, who wins his 34th cap at outside-half. "We have pace and power in this new back-line and I'm excited by that, but the reorganisation means Mike will

have to lead. There is more emphasis on Mike's performance this time, for sure."

That will have come as music to Welsh ears. Largely because of their line-out fragility - their recent performances in that crucial phase have come as close as the game is ever likely to get to situation comedy - and their suspect organisation in the face of driving mauls, the Welsh fear English tactical kicking, as practised by Wilkinson or Paul Grayson, more than they fear Catt's obsession with breaking the land speed record every time he receives the ball. Ultimately, the Grand Slam depends on Catt's ability to control his own instincts and, by extension, the game.

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WALES v ENGLAND	
at Wembley	
S Howarth	(Sale)
G Thomas	(Cardiff)
M Taylor	(Swansea)
S Gibbs	(Swansea)
D James	(Harlequins)
N Jenkins	(Pontypool)
R Howley	(Cardiff, capt)
P Rogers	(London Irish)
G Jenkins	(Swansea)
B Evans	(Richmond)
C Quinell	(Richmond)
C Wyatt	(Llanelli)
B Siskin	(Swansea)
B Charlis	(Leicester)
S Quinell	(Llanelli)
Replacements:	16 N Williams (Rugby), 17 T Bowden (Rugby), 18 D Lewis (Ebbw Vale), 19 M Voule (Llanelli), 20 D Young (Cardiff), 21 A Lewis (Cardiff), 22 S Williams (Richmond)
Referee:	A Watson (South Africa)
8 L Dauglis	(Wasps, capt)
7 N Back	(Leicester)
6 R Hill	(Saracens)
5 T Rodber	(Northampton)
4 M Johnson	(Leicester)
3 D Garforth	(Leicester)
2 R Cockerill	(Leicester)
1 J Leonard	(Harlequins)
9 M Dawson	(Northampton)
10 M Catte	(Bath)
11 S Hanley	(Sale)
12 J Wilkinson	(Newcastle)
13 B-J Mather	(Sale)
14 D Lugar	(Harlequins)
15 M Perry	(Bath)
16 N Beal	(Northampton)
17 T Underwood	(Newcastle)
18 A Healey	(Leicester)
19 M Carty	(Cardiff)
20 D Young	(Cardiff)
21 A Lewis	(Cardiff)
22 S McCarthy	(Gloucester)
Kick-off:	4.00 tomorrow (BSC1)

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3 D Garforth (Leicester)

2 R Cockerill (Leicester)

1 J Leonard (Harlequins)

9 M Dawson (Northampton)

10 M Catte (Bath)

11 S Hanley (Sale)

12 J Wilkinson (Newcastle)

13 B-J Mather (Sale)

14 D Lugar (Harlequins)

15 M Perry (Bath)

16 N Beal (Northampton)

17 T Underwood (Newcastle)

18 A Healey (Leicester)

1





APRIL

FA Carling Premiership - Chelsea v Leicester City  
Sky Sports 1

MAY

Tetley's Bitter Cup Final - Newcastle v Wasps  
Sky Sports 2

JUNE

Cricket World Cup Semi-Finals and Final  
Sky Sports 1

JULY

Pool World Championships  
Sky Sports 2

AUGUST

Start of US Open Tennis Championship  
Sky Sports 2 and 3

SEPTEMBER

Ryder Cup Golf - USA v Europe  
Sky Sports 1

OCTOBER

Super League Grand Final live from Old Trafford  
Sky Sports 1

NOVEMBER

South Africa v England 1st Test  
Sky Sports 2

DECEMBER

FA Cup 3rd Round  
Sky Sports 2

JANUARY

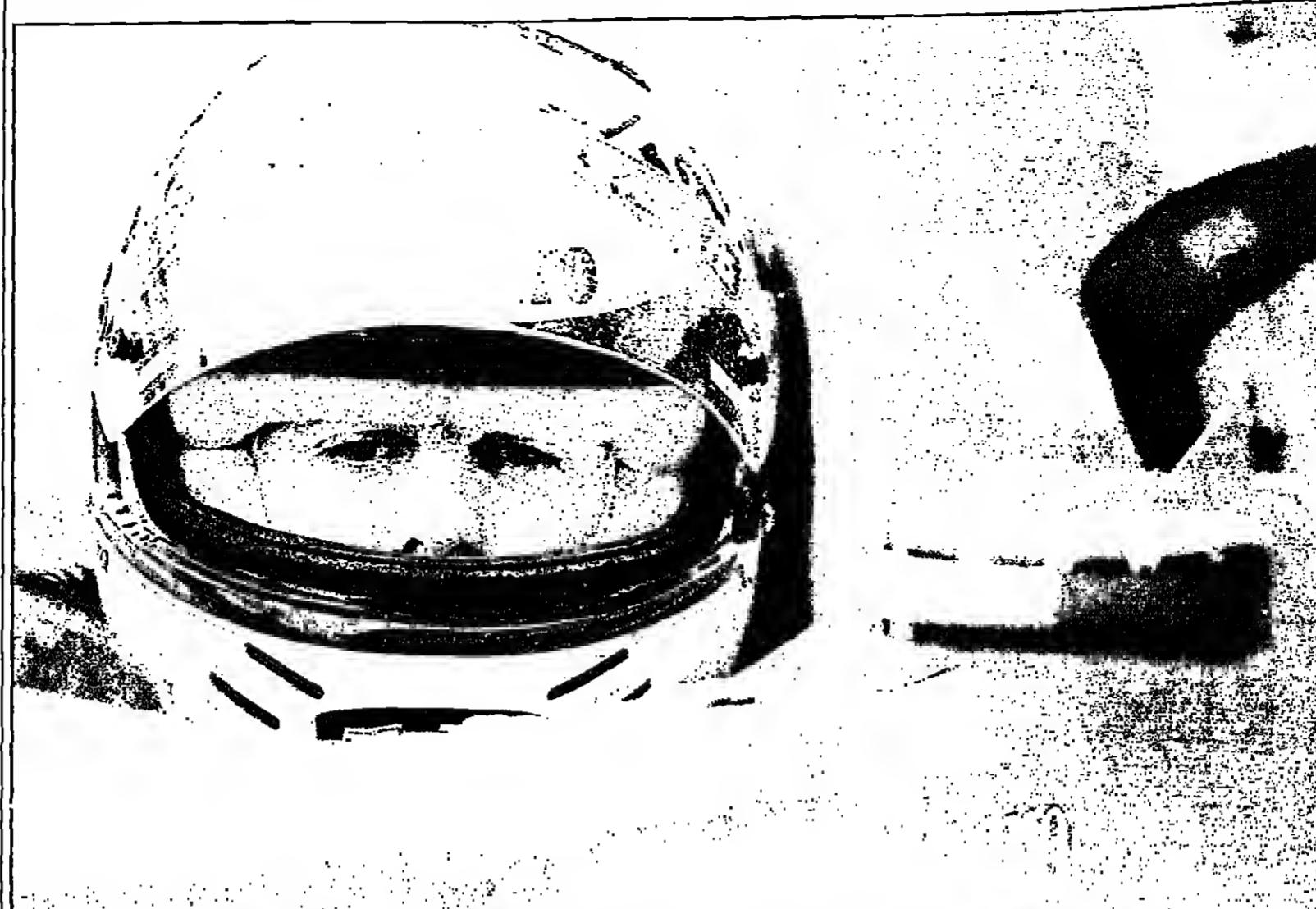
Worthington Cup Semi-Finals  
Sky Sports 2

**SKY SPORTS 1**  
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**SKY SPORTS 3**  
**SKY SPORTS \***  
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## Brazilian Grand Prix: German driver primed to upset established order



Ferrari's Michael Schumacher shows his determination in practice for the Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos yesterday

**Robinson faced with one-year suspension**

### BASKETBALL

BY RICHARD TAYLOR

JUST AS Derby Storm put one of their disciplinary problems behind them, another surfaced for the Budweiser League club yesterday, when their American player Maurice Robinson was banned from the game for one year after failing to supply a complete urine sample during a Sports Council doping control test.

The better news for Storm was that Yorick Williams rejoins their line-up for tonight's opening game against Thames Valley Tigers in their best of three play-off quarter-final, after completing his regular season ban following the brawl at Chester in January.

Derby are now appealing against Robinson's ban, which will clear him to play tonight and in Wednesday's second leg. However, if the appeal fails and the tie goes to a third game, Robinson could miss that and the finals at Wembley in three weeks' time, if Derby qualify.

Robinson's offence occurred when he was one of eight players tested by the Sports Council following the League Trophy final at the NEC on 13 March, which Derby lost to Manchester Giants.

Players are often dehydrated after games and Robinson could not supply a sample sufficient for analysis. But after he was given extra time to consume fluids, Robinson left the arena without providing the sample.

A statement by the Doping Control Committee of the English Basketball Association confirmed the "acceptance of the situation by the player" and added: "Failure to provide a complete sample constitutes a doping offence."

The Thames Valley Tigers' coach, Paul James, was in the meantime playing down the return of the England international Williams to the Derby line-up prior to tonight's match.

James said: "I'm sure he feels he has something to prove and that could disrupt them. Derby have played pretty well without Yorick."

**Hamilton has the measure of Hendry**

### SNOOKER

ANTHONY HAMILTON finally got the measure of Stephen Hendry for the first time yesterday to reach the semi-finals of the British Open in Plymouth.

After eight consecutive defeats, the Nottingham professional beat Hendry 5-3. "Stephen didn't play to his normal standard but this is a great result for me," the world No 11 said.

Hendry was not too disturbed by his defeat, saying: "There is nothing much wrong with my game. It's just my concentration that let me down today. If I don't get that right it will show up even more in the longer frame matches at Sheffield. But it's a good win for Anthony and he held himself together well at the end."

John Higgins is within two matches of retaining his title after another emphatic victory yesterday. The world champion achieved his second whitewash in four matches with a 5-0 trouncing of Brian Morgan, the world No 27 from Tiptree.

Higgins was dropped just two frames en route to the semi-finals and now plays Peter Ebdon, the world No 7, or Irish No 3, Fergal O'Brien.

"I hope Peter gets through because I haven't got a good record against him and I owe him a few," said the world No 1. "But really it doesn't matter I'm just pleased to get this far without being stretched. Long may it continue."

Morgan was fortunate to beat Nick Walker in the previous round, fending off the last red and clearing up to win on the pink for a 5-4 success. Higgins outscored him 440 points to 37 with breaks of 53, 47, 48, 42, 44 and 101.

"Brian missed a few shots and I managed to take advantage. There's not much more I can say," Higgins said.

## Jordan backs Frentzen

EDDIE JORDAN firmly believes that the ambition of Eddie Irvine, his former driver, to be leading the world championship into the San Marino Grand Prix in three weeks' time will be seriously threatened by the Jordan racer Heinz-Harald Frentzen this weekend.

Jordan was in his usual ebullient form in Interlagos yesterday, exuding the bonhomie of a man whose sale of 40 per cent of his company to the merchant bankers Warburg Pincus has liberated him from the financial worries that concern most people. "I tell you," Jordan insisted, "you overlook Heinz-Harald at your peril. You just watch him. I told him at the beginning of the year: 'I want spun. I want fire.' And the guy is really fired up. He's flying right now and he's ready for it. Don't underestimate him."

Frentzen lies second to Irvine in the world championship, after a successful start to his campaign in Australia where he challenged Irvine, the eventual winner, strongly

### MOTOR RACING

BY DAVID TREMAYNE

until an air filter worked loose and partially blocked the engine's intake, duping the electronic management system into automatically reicharging the fuel mixture. This forced the German to back off the throttle to conserve fuel and denied him the chance of pressuring Irvine into a mistake. "Without that," Jordan insists, "Heinz would have been right up there."

Interlagos is a tricky circuit at the best of times, one of the most challenging in the Formula One calendar even though it was shortened dramatically at the start of the decade. It is made more demanding by its relatively low grip, steep gradients, slow infield corners and fast, sweeping turns. But the biggest problem is its numerous bumps, which can seriously destabilise the stiffly sprung modern generation of cars. Yesterday the changeable weather added further to the challenge as the track was deluged short-

ly before free practice began in the morning.

If Frentzen is one of the dark horses for the Brazilian Grand Prix, yesterday it was business as usual initially as the McLaren duo, David Coulthard and Mika Hakkinen, headed the times when conditions were at their worst. Frentzen, the newcomer Stéphane Sarrazin (replacing the injured Luca Badoer at Mardi), Jarno Trulli, Giancarlo Fisichella, Pedro de la Ross and Ralf Schumacher all spun as they explored the limit of grip.

Behind the McLarens, local hero Rubens Barrichello was a star in his Stewart-Ford. After getting out with little over 20 minutes left in the first session, the Brazilian rewarded the patience of his spectating countrymen with, temporarily, the third fastest time, once again underlining the performance he had shown in the first race. But as the track began to dry out more it became a lottery.

Fisichella pushed his Benetton to the top of the timesheets before Damon Hill surged ahead. Then Coulthard restored the status quo as the track dried further, chased in the closing stages by Barrichello, Trulli and Johnny Herbert in the second. Stewart as the Scotsman's team pushed into the top five, tying for third place.

Ultimately Ralf Schumacher timed the switch to dry weather tyres the best, undercutting Coulthard's time by three and a half seconds to head Fisichella and his brother, Michael.

"It really was as simple as that," Schumacher said. "I got out at the right time, on the right tyres."

But while the German celebrated, his Wimfield Williams team-mate Alex Zanardi, the reigning American ChampCar champion, lay at the bottom of the times after his car had stopped with an electrical fault after one lap and remained in the garage throughout the session.

Friday practice times are a notoriously unreliable index of performance, as many teams run with differing fuel loads and not all are looking for ultimate speed at this stage. But a wet race might turn things upside down and give Schumacher a much-needed chance to claw back some of the deficit sooner than expected. His bravura display of car control as he threw the Ferrari round yesterday was a timely reminder of his uncanny talent, and perhaps also his mounting frustration.

Schumacher's prayers. However much the Ferrari team try to put a brave face on things after McLaren's upsetting pace in the season opener in Melbourne, it is clear that the red cars still have a long way to go before they can challenge on sheer speed. Yesterday a team insider admitted, "McLaren's pace in Australia simply stunned us. There was no way we expected to be so far behind. We knew that we went there without the optimum aerodynamic package, but though we've done a lot of testing since then I would say that we have no better than halved the gap."

There are already rumours of a whittling within a team desperate to win the title this season, and in the climate of growing demoralisation a wet race might turn things upside down and give Schumacher a much-needed chance to claw back some of the deficit sooner than expected. His bravura display of car control as he threw the Ferrari round yesterday was a timely reminder of his uncanny talent, and perhaps also his mounting frustration.

## Gateshead seek clarification

### RUGBY LEAGUE

BY DAVE HADFIELD

while their opponents Halifax, who have shown few signs yet of last season's form, might well come back Kelvin Sterrett and Chris Chester.

Going to Wigan when leading them in the table will not be the only novel experience for Warrington tomorrow. The Wigan team will also add to the air of unfamiliarity.

Injuries have forced John Monie to pair Andy Farrell and Jason Robinson at half-back, with Wes Davies at full-back for Kris Radlinski, who is to see a specialist about a knee injury that could keep him out for three months.

"It's a bonus for us," said the Warrington coach, Darryl Van de Velde. "But they've still got a lot of good players and adaptable players. We can't dismiss them, but we're still going there

with a spring in our step after four wins."

Van de Velde hopes that Simon Gillies and the influential Scott Wilson will be fit to return, but Jon Roper's absence for at least another month gives Michael Wainwright the chance to re-establish himself at loose forward, after what his coach calls the best form of his career over Easter.

No club did better over Easter than the Sheffield Eagles, whose two victories have almost persuaded their coach, John Kear, of the virtues of playing twice a week.

"It's turned our season around," he said. "The most that you will be able to lose and get into the top five will be about 10 games, so to have lost four at this stage would put you up against it."

Chris Thorman's reward for the clever kick that effectively won the match against Hull in the last minute is likely to be a

**Beeston aim to slip into play-offs**

### HOCKEY

BY BILL COLWILL

BEESTON, BACK from their exploits in Europe last weekend in which they finished a creditable fifth in their first attempt in the European Club Championship, could upset the season's form books tomorrow and snatch a place in next weekend's Premiership play-offs at Reading.

First, however, they must beat Southgate, already qualified for Reading, and then await the result from Canterbury. The Kent club would lose out if beaten by Gillingford. Mathematically a large defeat for Reading at home today, but Richardson says that their supporters, still new to the game, do not exert the same influence on referees. "It was a cauldron at Wilderspool," he said.

Gateshead have doubts over Andrew Hick and Adam Maher.

racist taunts will no longer be tolerated on the playing field and that a heavy price will be paid by offenders."

Everitt, who plays for St Kilda, admitted racially vilifying a Melbourne opponent, Scott Chisholm, during a match in Melbourne last Sunday.

He taunted Chisholm about the highly symbolic red, black and gold Aboriginal colours of his mouthguard and admitted using "other offensive terms".

"I put this discipline on myself and I've spoken to Scott. I'm going to undergo a four-week awareness program," Everitt said.

said. "I've probably crossed a line that shouldn't be crossed."

Australian Rules, which has the highest number of Aboriginal players at the elite level of any Australian sport, introduced a Racial and Religious Vilification Code in 1995 after a series of racial slaps. Up until now the code has never been used. Had Everitt not preempted a tribunal hearing, he could have been the first player punished under it.

The Everitt row came a week after another incident that stirred debate on the issue of racism in Australian Rules.

Sam Newman, a former star player and current TV personality, painted his face black to impersonate the Aboriginal player Nicky Wimmar after the Aboriginal player pulled out of an appearance on his show.

Wimmar is a leading advocate of Aboriginality in the Australian Football League. In 1993, responding to taunts from opposing fans, he famously raised his jersey during a match against Collingwood and pointed to the colour of his skin.

Djerrkura said that, while Australia had a proud sporting tradition, the events of the past two weeks had threatened to stain its reputation.

"Racism is a corrosive phenomenon and strong leadership is needed to ensure it is quickly stamped out," he said.

## Racism backfires on St Kilda player

### AUSTRALIAN RULES

Geoffrey Djerrkura, the chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission said football players and clubs were "now on clear notice that

Distr...



FA Cup semi-final: Arsenal manager thankful for a back-line with 'degrees in defending' as he closes in on another Double

# Wenger is still a man of mystery

**WHEN HE** came to England in September 1994, Arsène Wenger was largely unknown. Today his scholarly features and thoughtful comments are as much part of the game's landscape as Kevin Keegan's enthusiasm and Gianluca Vialli's studied humility. Yet he remains a man of contradiction and mystery.

We know he was born in the Alsace, near the Franco-German border; was a modest player - briefly reaching the top level with Strasbourg - who developed into a respected coach with Monaco and in Japan. He has a girlfriend, Annie, and child, who remain in France, but we know little of his hobbies or interests outside football. It seems there may not be any.

He is polite and quiet, yet tough enough to command respect in the industrial atmosphere of an English dressing room, and rough enough to tolerate one of the worst disciplinary records in the game.

He has enough sense of history, and sportsmanship, to persuade his club and the Football Association to annul the controversial FA Cup victory over Sheffield United earlier this season, yet when Dennis Bergkamp became the 51st Footballer of the Year last May, only with reluctance did he allow the player to make the briefest of appearances to collect his award.

More insights into Wenger will emerge for, earlier this season, he signed a contract which ended speculation linking the 49-year-old with Japan's 2002 World Cup campaign, and tied him to Highbury until that summer.

Whether they will reveal a complex man or simply one with a passion for winning and football remains to be seen. In the meantime, we assemble snippets of information, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and he collects trophies.

On Tuesday, at Highbury, Arsenal heat Blackburn to move within a point of Manchester United in the Premiership. Tomorrow, at Villa Park, they meet United in the FA Cup semi-final. Both clubs are within reach of becoming the first to achieve three Doubles, in Arsenal's case the feat would, uniquely, be back-to-back.

Yesterday, as he prepared his players at Arsenal's green-belt training ground, the economics graduate was urban, calm and unrevelatory as ever. With Arsenal having won four and drawn one of their last five matches with United, he had no need to be anything else.

A few days earlier, over

natural captain and I can see him being manager at Arsenal. His heart is here. I could also think of Roud, Seaman, Dixon, Winterburn, they are all intelligent, they could all be managers.

"But while they have potential to do it, the question is whether they will want to sacrifice so much of their life when they have already spent so much time in football. Are they really motivated?"

Wenger, who was relegated early in his coaching career, with Nancy, added: "If they wanted to do some coaching I would give them the chance but my advice is: 'Do not be too quick, take your time to learn the job'."

So, should Adams start at Southend rather than Highbury? "Bad players can become good managers, you do not have to be a good player. But one of the privileges of being a great player is that you get quicker to managing a big team than a normal player. The biggest thing for a manager is to get into a big club so if you get the chance you must be ready, so you must first learn your job."

"I haven't spoken to Tony about it, he still has some years to go as a player. I think he will go on to 2003, 2004, unless injuries become a problem. At the moment they are not, the only problem is how long will he want to go on. He is a winner and a winner never accepts not being a winner anymore. When he feels he is no longer strong enough to win things he will say: 'Sorry, I'm out'. If he is motivated he can go on until he is 37, 38. At the moment he looks very focused, he has found a good balance in his life and is happy with his football."

Wenger, too, seems happy with life, though it appears very one-dimensional. Two years ago this month I interviewed him towards the end of his first season at Highbury. He said all he knew of London were the journeys from his house to Highbury, to the training ground, and to Heathrow. That remains the case.

Many will find this sad and a waste of his opportunities and intellect. Wenger is unconcerned. "I sacrificed everything at the start of my career for 10 years and now it has become my natural way to live. At the start of your career you sacrifice more because, not used to pressure and making decisions, you don't know if the job is for you. There is more pressure on me now but I feel it more than ever."

Wenger has more than fulfilled Arsenal's initial expectations but it is the nature of the game that, as success increases,

lunch, he had been a hit more expansive. The speed of Arsenal's success had surprised him, he thought Tony Adams could eventually succeed him, and that Glenn Hoddle should get back on the managerial merry-go-round as soon as possible.

He also surprised. His footballing preference may be Gallic, as the number of French players at Highbury illustrates, but when given control of the wine list he eschewed a long list of Claret, Burgundies and Côtes-des-Rhône, to choose a Californian red. Not that he drank much of it. Wenger, unsurprisingly, is a sinner rather than a quaffer.



GLENN  
MOORE

*'Tony Adams is a natural captain and I can see him being manager at Arsenal. His heart is here'*

He has, against his own expectations, drawn more heavily on his vintage footballers. "When I arrived," he said, "I felt the team was at its peak, getting old and needed some regeneration. Since the Premier League existed it had not been involved in the championship. I thought maybe we were far behind teams like Manchester United or Liverpool. But I was encouraged because we finished third in my first season."

While Wenger theo built on Bruce Rioch's changes, adding Marc Overmars and a posse of Frenchmen to his signing of Dennis Bergkamp, he realised the defence was capable of going on far longer than anyone anticipated. The "sound-bite" is a Wenger characteristic and he has one for his famed back-line. They have, he said, "degrees in defending" while Adams "is a professor of defence".

The 33-year-old Adams, whose influence in the dressing room was crucial to Wenger winning the team's confidence, remains a core figure. "He is a

Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, in positive mood yesterday as he prepared for tomorrow's FA Cup semi-final

Robert Hallam

so do expectations. However the next few weeks pan out, Wenger will begin next season expected to do much better in the Champions' League. Lessons, he admits, have been absorbed from this season's campaign even if the answers have not all been resolved.

"We learned many things. Maybe we were a little bit too short as a squad, maybe I underestimated suspensions would come so quickly. I think we got punished by that.

Wenger believes that English clubs, and the English game, is still suffering from the effects of the post-Heysel ban. He hoped Manchester United and

Chelsea would succeed in Europe and that would mitigate the blame he expects to be attached to the influx of foreign players should England fail to qualify for Euro 2000.

For the man who partly lost his job because of England's poor start to the European Championship campaign, Glenn Hoddle, Wenger's advice is clear: "The question is do you let time heal it or go straight away into different worries and forget about it. I

think he should go as quickly as possible into a management job, here or abroad.

"I don't think what happened to him will be a problem for his career in England. I think he can still be successful as a club manager. He is a good analyser of the game and not scared to make decisions. If you look at his record his results are good, he lost only four games with England and did well at Swindon and Chelsea."

And Eileen Dredrey?

has those in abundance.

## Usual suspects rule semi-final roost

BY GUY HODGSON

ONE DAY someone will write about the true magic of the FA Cup. Not about the postman who had, as a youngster dreamed of shining Gary Lineker's boots, or the non-League team who embarrassed their betters, but about the lasting fascination for a competition which is more predictable by the year.

If you had picked four teams most likely to reach tomorrow's semi-finals you would not have run the risk of being certified if you had come up with Arsenal, Manchester United, Newcastle and Tottenham. Indeed, beggin' Chelsea and Leeds' pardon, they are arguably playing better than anyone else in the Premiership.

You have to go back seven years since a team from outside

the top division, Sunderland, made it to Wembley and to 1976 since Southampton of the then-Second Division surprised Manchester United. Those exceptions apart, the rule has come from the usual sources.

Tomorrow as much as any time, as the last four contains both 1998 finalists, the three most recent winners of the Double and, in Arsenal and United, the two clubs who have won the Cup five times between them in the 1990s. Why we get so excited by Oldham versus Chelsea and their likes on frozen January pitches, when we already have a good idea what is going to happen, is something that only romantics can explain.

Phil Neville remembered

United's defeat by Barnsley last year in his book, co-written with his brother Gary, *For Club and Country*. "Anyone who thought we didn't care about the FA Cup should have seen us in the dressing room or on the coach home... We were devastated."

So United will be hell-bent to beat Arsenal at Villa Park tomorrow even though the tie comes at an inconvenient point in the season, midway between their Champions' League semi-final with Juventus. Pride,

glory, you name the reason - the FA Cup still has the power to excite or despair.

United, going for a treble, will be anxious to win tomorrow no matter what team they put out and particularly as they have scores to settle with the players who are chasing them hardest in the Premiership. Until they held Arsenal to a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford in February, they had lost four consecutive games to the Gunners.

If you thought Juventus made a mess of Manchester United's vaunted reputation, particularly in the first half at Old Trafford on Wednesday, then it was not the first time this season. They were thoroughly beaten by Arsenal in the Charity Shield and lost again 3-0 at Highbury in September.

"We were outplayed," Roy Keane admitted afterwards and it was in his department, midfield, where the game was won. Patrick Vieira eclipsed the Irishman on both those occasions.

Emmanuel Petit will not be there to help his French compatriot tomorrow because he is suspended, but in a week when United have been labouring in Europe that will not be as crucial as would have been if they were fresh. Marc Overmars is a player who can exact terrible damage on tired limbs.

If United and Arsenal need no introduction then neither do Newcastle and Tottenham, who meet at Old Trafford six days after a 1-1 draw in the Premiership. That was a dress rehearsal without the principal actors: Alan Shearer,

David Ginola and the rest will be present tomorrow.

In the Toon Army's night-mares it is Ginola, a Newcastle idol too cavalier for the round-head Kenny Dalglish, who will spread sobs on the Tyne and if he provides the cross that allows Les Ferdinand, another former St James' Park player, to score the winner their misery will be complete.

Leicester City employed Rob Ullathorne to man-mark the Frenchman into near irrelevance in the Worthington Cup Final at Wembley last month and Andy Griffin will probably get the task tomorrow.

"He's one of the best players in the League, without doubt," Griffin said. "In the last couple of months, he's ripped teams apart single-handedly, but it showed in the Worthington Cup final that he's only human and can be kept quiet."

If Newcastle can contain Ginola and give Dietmar Hamann the space to play his subtle passing game then they have a chance to repeat their appearance in last year's final, but it is a big "if". Tottenham have won once at Wembley this season and have more "big-game" players.

Arsenal to win by a single goal and Tottenham to go through after a replay. A north London FA Cup final derby? Now that is something that has not happened before.

AFTER PULLING themselves out of the bottom three with an impressive Easter Monday victory over West Ham, Charlton are already considering leaving The Valley for a new 45,000 all-seater stadium at the Millennium Dome site in Greenwich.

Alan Curbishley, the Charlton manager, yesterday admitted that Charlton are to survive in the Premiership, they would have to find ways of increasing the club's revenue and that involved either extending the current stadium or leaving altogether.

"A 40,000 stadium is what it takes to compete in this league," Curbishley said. "Bryan Robson is saying he's got to spend £20m to catch up with the likes of Manchester United. So how much does that leave us behind them?"

Curbishley continues the club's battle for survival at the Riverside Stadium today without the Welsh international John Robinson who sustained an ankle injury at West Ham, Boro, now clear of the relegation battle after 10 points from their last four games, are expected to have strikers Brian Deane and Alan Armstrong fit again.

The West Ham striker Ian Wright could make his first Premiership appearance for more than three months at Leicester. Wright, whose last game was on 28 December, came through 45 minutes of a reserve game in midweek and will take his place on the bench at Filbert Street.

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# Aintree claims the life of D'Estruval

By RICHARD EDMONDSON  
at Aintree

**JUST SIX** of the 37 pilgrims which set out in the Grand National 12 months ago returned. And one of them was remounted. It was not a survival rate to gladden the RSPCA and today there will be a society inspector at every fence monitoring the effectiveness of safety measures introduced in the wake of Aintree 1988.

The track's notoriety is prompted largely by obstacles such as Becher's Brook, Valentine's and The Chair, yet it is the first fence which regularly catches the most victims. In an effort to make the stampeade to the initial test safer the fence has been widened by two metres to give combatants more space to jump. It is now the widest steeplechase obstacle in the country.

"Although the racing industry is making safety a priority and addressing some of our welfare concerns, there is still some way to go and we will continue to monitor and advise on areas where horse safety and welfare becomes an issue," Chris Laurence, the acting RSPCA veterinary officer said. "We welcome the new safety measures, which are being implemented following an inquiry into the deaths of three horses at last year's Grand National."

## Desert in Gladness

AIDAN O'BRIEN runs Black Rock Desert in the Group Three Gladness Stakes at the Curragh tomorrow. Black Rock Desert is at 11-1 for the 2,000 Guineas with Ladbrokes.

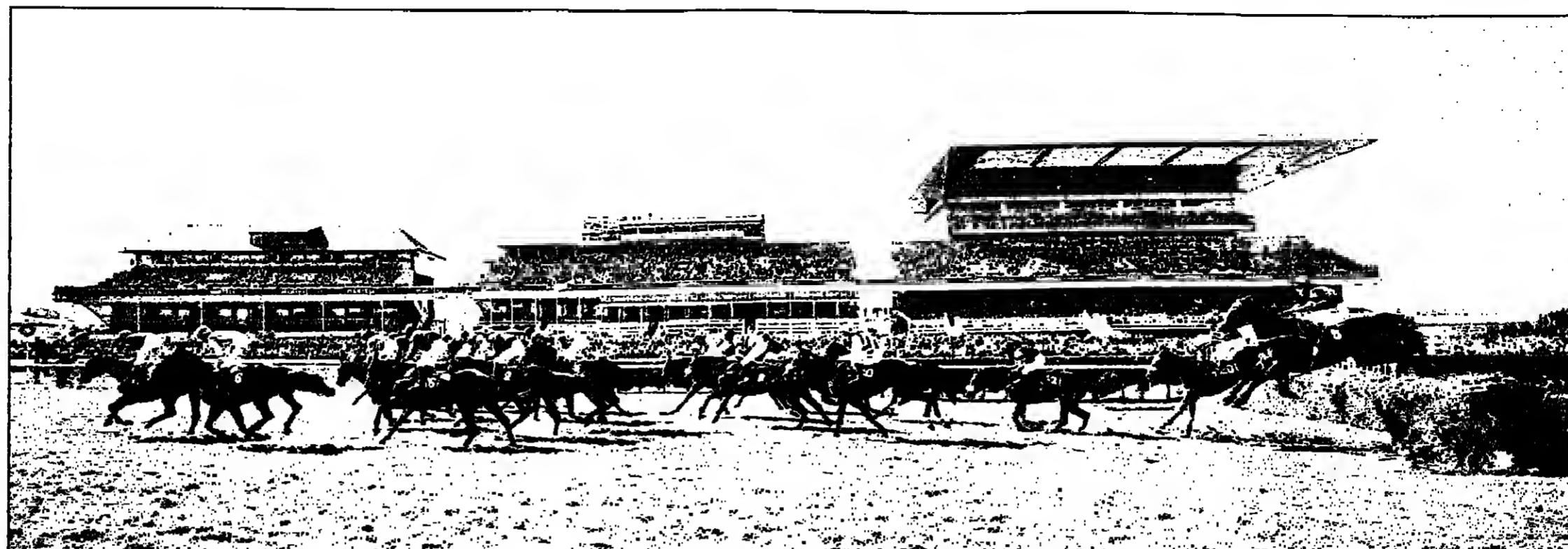
Blue Cloud remains on course for the 1,000 Guineas after a narrow victory in the Prix Impudique over seven furlongs at Maisons-Laffitte yesterday. The André Fabre-trained, Olivier Peslier-ridden, Desiré-Peslier, beat the odds-on favourite, beat

**AINTREE**  
**1.45: ROAD RACER** struck top form on Newbury's firm surface a fortnight ago and, if the ground continues to dry out, this fluent jumper will prove hard to beat. Fataliste is likely to set a fierce pace, which could play into the hands of Shankan. The latter's recent form figures look dismal, but this grey invariably performs well on this tight track and won the race two years ago.  
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**2.20: Celibate**, Green Green Desert and Cumbrian Challenge all finished out of the frame in the two-mile Champion Chase at Cheltenham last month. Of the trio, GREEN GREEN DESERT might be best suited by this very different course. Flying Instructor needs rain to enhance his chance.  
0000

**2.55: ISTABRAQ** was turned over by Pridwell when odds-on in this contest last year. But another shock defeat looks extremely unlikely on this faster surface. Charlie Swan's mount won with such authority at Cheltenham last time that it seems futile to oppose him.  
0000

**3.45: Unless heavy rain arrives, mud-lovers such as Fiddling The Facts, General Wolfe and Kendal Cavalier could struggle. Call It A Day, in contrast, has a preference for good ground. Taken with the fact that he**



To the backdrop of the Aintree grandstands, the runners for yesterday's John Hughes Memorial Chase won by Listen Timmy stream over the water jump

David Ashdown

has saved poor Gris D'Estruval, who negotiated several of the big fences in the John Hughes Chase, but then fractured a cannon bone on the flat. He was destroyed. Budalios too will never see again. He was a victim of his own tiredness and bravery in the Oddbins Handicap Hurdle. He fell at the last and did not rise, the crowd shocked as his legs thrashed, the result of a broken neck.

The John Hughes was won by Listen Timmy, who is owned by Stan Clarke but ran in the colours of the Sentinel Racing Club to whom he is leased. Clarke, who owns Lord Gyllyne, the National winner two years ago, did see his livery transported to victory in the opener when Barton extended his unbeaten record to seven.

This was not the same energetic Barton we saw at Cheltenham and he had to show that he has steel as well as skill when fighting off the milky-skinned Autobet. "I know he was not as impressive as at Cheltenham, but people make sure they have their horses 100 percent for that," Lorcan Wyer, the winning jockey, said. "I do

not want to take anything away from the grey horse but that sort of explains why he was not so spectacular this time. What he wants now is the same as me, to be turned out in a field with a big New Zealand rug."

Spendif, however, may still have mountains to climb. The

winner of the Mildmay Novices' Chase could now take in Purfleetown. "I always said he'd win a good one," David Nicholson, his trainer, reported. "He is a very tough horse, one of the toughest I've had, and in the same mould as Viking Flagship. Results, page 23

tenham and he had to show that he has steel as well as skill when fighting off the milky-skinned Autobet. "I know he was not as impressive as at Cheltenham, but people make sure they have their horses 100 percent for that," Lorcan Wyer, the winning jockey, said. "I do

## HAMILTON

### HYPERION

**1.10 Top Jem 1.40 Top Of The Class 2.10 Jeffrey Anotherred 2.40 Brandon Court 3.05 Captain Miller 3.35 Shakley**

**COING** (Soft Heavy in places).  
STAMPEDE: High ground, remainder - stands side by side. ADVANTAGE: High ground in 305.

■ Right-hand undulating course with paved-shaped loop.

■ Course is north of town on B7071, Hamilton West station (service from Glasgow). in. ADMISSION: Club £12; Restaurant and Paddock £7 (for DPs, disabled & students). Accompanied by 100 free entries CAR PARK: Free.

■ LEADING TRAINERS: M Johnson 22-51 (192%), J Berry 26-12 (44%), L Parnell 22-23 (54%). O Haynes Jones 14-63 (20%).

■ LEADING JOCKEYS: J Weaver 30-20 (25%), K Darley 26-16 (63%), J Fortune 25-32 (18%), A Mackay 22-15 (191%).

■ FAVOURITES: 1.00 Jem 1.40 Shakley 2.00.

■ TIME STANDARDS: 1m 50s. BUNKERED FIRST TIME: Slip Jig (reduced), Pull Moon (reduced, 335).

■ LONG-DISTANCE RUNNER: Vola Premiere (240) set a 41 miles.

- 17 declared -

Minimum weight: 102. The handicaps weigh Systeme Couper 62g BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

### FORM VERDICT

Soft ground and the steeple will place the emphasis on stamina, and TDP Jem should not be unduly inconvenienced by the slight step back in distance. She remains well trained on her old form, and may be hard to beat if she reproduces her Leicestershire running. Torrade and Western General could give her a boost to do.

Listen Timmy, who is owned by Stan Clarke but ran in the colours of the Sentinel Racing Club to whom he is leased.

Clarke, who owns Lord Gyllyne, the National winner two years ago, did see his livery transported to victory in the opener when Barton extended his unbeaten record to seven.

This was not the same energetic Barton we saw at Cheltenham and he had to show that he has steel as well as skill when fighting off the milky-skinned Autobet. "I know he was not as impressive as at Cheltenham, but people make sure they have their horses 100 percent for that," Lorcan Wyer, the winning jockey, said. "I do

not want to take anything away from the grey horse but that sort of explains why he was not so spectacular this time. What he wants now is the same as me, to be turned out in a field with a big New Zealand rug."

Spendif, however, may still have mountains to climb. The

## WILLIAM HILL ACTION LINE NOV. C4

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## WILLIAM HILL RING NOW - BET C4

**2.40 WILLIAM HILL RING NOW - BET C4**

Minimum weight: 102. The handicaps weigh Systeme Couper 62g BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

### FORM VERDICT

Kingston Bill looked a far prospect at Newcastle, but it is difficult to make much of the form and the concession of weight all round could prove beyond him. Inexperience let down Barrington, but he will surely succeed in going Mack Chivenor in a repeat of last year's race. His Top Of The Class, who looks scope, is again likely to struggle.

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## WILLIAM HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f

**3.35 WILLIAM HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f**

Minimum weight: 102. True handicap weight: Tycoon 7m 2s. BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

### FORM VERDICT

The far side is the place to be if you're going in sprinns so two of the three handicaps are here. Listen Timmy, who has been better beaten than beaten, Unshaken does another win after a series of good efforts, but the one who appeals most is JEFFREY ANOTHERRED who is well suited by soft ground, is well drawn and comes here in form.

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Minimum weight: 102. True handicap weight: Tycoon 7m 2s. BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

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**5.35 WILLIAM HILL HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f**

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**6.35 WILLIAM HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f**

Minimum weight: 102. True handicap weight: Tycoon 7m 2s. BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

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## WILLIAM HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f

**7.35 WILLIAM HILL SPREAD INDEX MAIDEN EN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,000 added 1m 3f**

Minimum weight: 102. True handicap weight: Tycoon 7m 2s. BETTING: 3-1 Top Jem, 1-1 Brandon Court, 1-1 Internal Affairs, 1-1 Torrade, 1-1 others

### FORM VERDICT

The far side is the place to be if you're going in sprinns so two of the three handicaps are here. Listen Timmy, who has been better beaten than beaten, Unshaken does another win after a series of good efforts, but the one who appeals most is JEFFREY ANOTHERRED who is well suited by soft ground, is well drawn and comes here in form.

This was not the same energetic Barton we saw at Cheltenham and he had to show that he has steel as well as skill when



# Grand National colours and form

3.45  
BBC1

1 2-1FP SUNY BAY (23) 10yo 1st 13b G Bradley 12-1

Owner: Uplands Bloodstock. Trainer: S Sherwood.

No grey has won the Grand National since Niclaus Silver in 1981 but this fellow has gone closer than most, finishing runner-up to Lord Glynnie and Earth Summit in the last two runnings. After a promising start this term, he fell when very tired in Ireland at Christmas and was outpaced in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time. Has an each-way chance.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 149



2 6-1F6 GENERAL WOLFE (42) (BF) 10yo 1st 1b N Williamson 14-1

Owner: The Winning Line. Trainer: Miss Venetia Williams.

Useful chaser, whose talented trainer promises to be the next Jerry Pitman, and won the Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock over three miles on his seasonal debut. However, he was tired when falling at the last fence and then failed to finish sixth on his two subsequent runs (both over 3½ miles) and might have stamina limitations. Needs softer ground.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 143



3 1-2P0 EARTH SUMMIT (77) (CD) 11yo 1st C Llewellyn B 16-1

Owner: The Sumner Partnership Inc. Trainer: N Twiston-Davies.

Won last year's Grand National, having won the Scottish National at Ayr in 1994 and the Welsh National at Chepstow in 1997. In form early in the season and, although he has disappointed on his two most recent runs, it could be a mistake to write him off - he was well beaten in both his outings prior to winning last year. Best on heavy ground.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 151



4 3P-1PP COOME HILL (106) 10yo 1st 1lb S Wynne 25-1

Owner: Mrs Jill Dennis. Trainer: W Dennis.

Winner of the 1996 Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury but has had training problems since - he has had a soft palate operation and missed much of last season because of heat in his leg. He seemed back to form when winning over three miles at Ascot in November but has disappointed since. Could go well if he stays this marathon distance.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 146



5 2P-P4P CYBORGO (42) 9yo 1st 1lb C O'Dwyer B 50-1

Owner: County Stores Somerset Holdings Ltd. Trainer: M Pipe.

Formerly a high-class hurdler (won 1996 Stayers' Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival) and chaser but went lame in the 1998 Cheltenham Gold Cup and has looked a shadow of his former self this season. He often makes the running and, a thorough stayer and a sound jumper, he would have every chance if he recovered his best form.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 133



6 3-24D EUDIPE (42) (BF) 7yo 1st 10b A P McCoy 8-1

Owner: D A Johnson. Trainer: M Pipe.

This talented youngster has run some good races this season, finishing second to Teeton Mill in the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury and fourth to Kendal Cavalier in the Welsh National at Chepstow before winning at Sandown. He disappointed at Haydock last time but stays and jumps well and has sound prospects if he returns to form.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 144



7 12-14 DOUBLE THRILLER (23) 9yo 1st 8b J Tizzard 9-2

Owner: R C Wilkins. Trainer: P Nichols.

This big, strong former hunter-chaser - he beat the high-class Teeton Mill in that sphere last season - scored impressive victories at Wincanton this term before finishing a disappointing 32 lengths fourth to See More Business in the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Is a short price for a horse who is unproven beyond 3½ miles and can make mistakes.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 155



8 P-P35 ADDINGTON BOY (23) 11yo 1st 7b A Maguire 8-1

Owner: Gott Foods Ltd. Trainer: F Murphy.

A very smart performer for the late Gordon Richards two years ago, but reportedly endured a traumatic accident at his stables and has not been the same since. Has run a bit better this season and was just behind Double Thriller when fifth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time and will go on the ground, but is not sure to stay and can make mistakes.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 144



9 11PP2P TAMARINDO (25) 6yo 1st 4b T J Murphy 66-1

Owner: D A Johnson. Trainer: M Pipe.

Precocious (prior to this year's rule change) the National was for seven-year-olds and upwards only) French-bred who won his first two races over fences despite being asked to tackle Cheltenham's tough obstacles. Disappointing since, unproven beyond three miles and tends to jump to his left, but would be an interesting outsider if returning to form.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 149



10 F-3222 FIDDLING THE FACTS (42) (BF) 8yo 1st 3b M A Fitzgerald 9-1

Owner: Mrs E Roberts. Trainer: N Henderson.

Very tough mare who has been a big-race bridesmaid this season, finishing second to Kendal Cavalier in the 3½-mile Welsh National at Chepstow and runner-up to Young Kenny in the Greenside Grand National at Haydock last time. Stays very well - and is effective in the mud - but is not the best of jumpers and that has to be a major worry.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 142



11 51-31P BARONET (21) 9yo 1st 2b R Johnson 16-1

Owner: Mrs David Thompson. Trainer: D Nicholson.

This grey stayer won the Scottish National over four miles and a furlong at Ayr last year and looked better than ever when winning over the same trip at Cheltenham in January. However, he was never going well and was pulled up in the Midlands National before Young Kenny and Call It A Day at Uttoxeter last time and his jumping is far from fluent.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 141



12 2P4432 CALL IT A DAY (21) 9yo 1st R Dunwoody 6-1

Owner: Mrs Jane Lane. Trainer: D Nicholson.

Smart chaser who won the Whitbread Gold Cup at Sandown last season and was runner-up to Young Kenny in the Midlands National over 4½ miles at Uttoxeter last time. Stays and jumps well and, with dual National winner Richard Dunwoody (in West Tip in 1994 and Minnehoma in 1994) in the saddle, he looks the one they all have to beat.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 156



13 1-3P-0 BELLS LIFE (24) (C) 10yo 1st G Torrey 66-1

Owner: R Gibbs. Trainer: P Hobbs.

Lightly-raced sort who showed he handles the fences when winning the John Hughes Chase over 2½ miles here in 1997. Not badly handicapped on his best form - and the sort to be up there disputing the lead for the first circuit - but showed lots on his seasonal debut and may be backpedaling at the business end of the race.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 145



14 5-3P-0 AVRO ANSON (F15) 9yo 1st A Dobbins 160-1

Owner: Axon. Trainer: Mrs J A Carracho.

Tall but slightly-butch sort, who was a top-class hurdler and a useful chaser, but was never jumping fluently when well-backed in the 1997 Grand National and has shown little since. Finished unplaced on the Flat - form figures are for jump races only - at Doncaster last week. Not sure to stay this distance either but will relish the decent ground.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 142



15 1-21SP KENDAL CAVALIER (63) 9yo 1st B Fenlon 20-1

Owner: Michael Wingfield Digby. Trainer: N Hawke.

Tough stayer who won the Welsh National at Chepstow last December (beating Fiddling The Facts by half a length) but was pulled up on his last outing at Uttoxeter when extremely well (he is best on heavy ground) and jumps soundly, but carries 13b more than his true handicap weight and his best form still leaves him with something to find to win this.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 139



16 4-5P3 NAHTHEN LAD (25) 10yo 1st A Thornton B 14-1

Owner: J Shaw. Trainer: Mrs J Pitman.

Smart chaser on his day who finished third to Betty's Boy in the National Hunt Chase at the Cheltenham Festival. However, he fell at the 11th fence in last year's National and was only ninth to Lord Glynnie in 1997, and carries 7b more than his true handicap weight. His trainer has won this race twice - Corbero (1983) and Royal Athlete (1995).

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 143



17 1-0-40 MUDAHIM (42) 13yo 1st B Powell B 100-1

Owner: Salvo Gerrit. Trainer: P Hobbs.

Won the 1997 Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse when trained by Jenny Pitman but was injured on his only outing last season and has appeared in decline on both starts this new year thus far. Stays and jumps soundly and effective on any going but is no longer any younger and has tough task carrying 8b more than his true handicap weight.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 103



## THE AINTREE COURSE

## Valentine's Brook

The twin of Becher's, but with far less impact. Only six have gone here in 15 years

Foinavon

One of the smallest fences on the course, but the cause of the pile-up that enabled Foinavon to win in 1967

Becher's Brook

Fences Six and Seven

Westhead

First of the ditches and, after

Becher's and The Chair, the

widest spread to clear. There

have been 52 fallers here in the

last 16 years

The Chair

Fence 15

Water jump

15-foot spread

494-yard run-in from last

fence to the winning post

The field approach at such a

pace on the first circuit that

this obstacle has claimed 57

casualties in 16 years;

including seven in 1995

How to Read the Form

Form over

seasons ago

Slipped up

Unraced this

further down

Ran well

Finished 4th

Finished 6th

Name

Course winner

Course and

distance winner

Age

Jockey

Odds

Blinked

Rating

18 6-22FP SAMLEE (103) (C) 10yo 1st R Farrant B 40-1

Owner: White Lion Partnership. Trainer: P Hobbs.

Slow stayer who plodded on to finish third of six finishers to Earth Summit in last year's National on heavy ground. Finished second of three finishers to same rival at the Becher's Chase here in November but was pulled up behind Kendal Cavalier in the Welsh National last time. Not a fluent jumper, but must carry 10b more than his true handicap weight.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 135



19 50054 BOBBYJO (24) 9yo 1st P Carberry 18-1

Owner: Robert Burke. Trainer: T Carberry (H).

Useful Irish chaser who won the Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse last year and showed he is coming to hand when winning over hurdles at Down Royal recently. Stays 3½ miles well and a sound jumper, he could go well if he lasts the extra distance, but has no more than place claims carrying a stone more than his true handicap weight.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 130



20 42U0-P BRAVE HIGHLANDER (38) 11yo 1st P Hide 66-1

Owner: S N J Emberton. Trainer: J Griford.

Likely-faced over two years but won at Wincanton and Folkestone last season and was going well in fifth place when unseating his jockey in last year's National at the Canal Turn second time round. Disappointing on his only run this term at Chepstow and carries 16b more than his true handicap weight but might just reach the frame if he gets round.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 123



21 15-422 BLUE CHARM (28) 9yo 1st L Wyer 40-1

Owner: Mrs M C Lindsey. Trainer: Mrs S Bradburne.

Once useful, this veteran who has had a soft palate operation, is lightly-raced nowadays, a bad jumper and, under J Wyer, produced Red Rum to win the Grand National a record three times in the 1970s, but the chances of this fellow, who carries 17b more than his true handicap weight, bearing ginger back in the meantime are remote.

Going ✓ Distance ✓ Jumping ✓ Rating 100





# YOUR MONEY

PERSONAL FINANCE • MOTORING • PROPERTY

**WELCOME TO A  
NEW WORLD OF  
OPPORTUNITY**

INVESTING, PAGE 5

**THE BEGINNER'S  
GUIDE TO HOLIDAY  
DRIVING IN EUROPE**

MOTORING, PAGE 8

**A GARDEN OF  
EDEN OFF THE  
FINCHLEY ROAD?**

PROPERTY, PAGE 9

## Goodbye PEP, hello ISA

After months of hype, the first ISAs are on sale at last. But should you invest? By Nic Cicutti

**E**veryone dreams of making history. For many of us, this might involve saving the world, scoring the winning goal in a cup final, or making 10 million-selling hit record.

This week, in his own slightly less dramatic way, Ash Rawal, a 38-year-old corporate consultant from Derby, also made history. At one minute after midnight on 6 April, Mr Rawal became the first person in the UK to buy an Individual Savings Account, Labour's new tax-free savings vehicle.

Whether his decision to stay up late turns out to be the epoch-making step Labour hopes crucially depends on whether millions of other savers follow his lead, and also invest in an ISA. And more important still will be the question of just who is investing: the acid test will be whether the ISA succeeds in attracting into it lower-paid people, who traditionally have been ignored by the savings market.

ISAs, which offer shelter from capital gains tax to investments, are the Treasury's answer to this perceived disenfranchisement. Unlike PEPs, which were primarily about investing in shares or bonds, ISAs will also allow savings to go into instant-access accounts or even insurance-linked products, both seen as more likely vehicles for working-class people's cash.

Despite the Treasury's best intentions, experts are mostly cynical about whether ISAs will improve savings habits among the working population. Research by the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (Autif) suggested in March that consumers were unwilling to "commit" to the new savings product. Some 59 per cent of those surveyed were committed phobes where ISAs were concerned, up from 52 per cent six months earlier.

These worrying findings led Anne McMeekin, director of communications at Autif, to say: "It is worrying that ISAs have still not succeeded in attracting wider public support. It seems the investment industry is already experiencing an uphill struggle in converting its existing customers."

Autif's findings are matched by Marks & Spencer Financial Services, whose own survey shows that of the 67 per cent of adults who have heard of ISAs, more than half still know nothing about them.



The first ever ISA customer, Ash Rawal, gets his slice of the cake

Similar research emanates from Yorkshire bank, whose savings manager, Andrew Hindle, adds: "Given the Government's aim for the ISA - to end confusion and to make tax-free savings more accessible - our study shows much work to be done. Rather than end confusion, the level of understanding has not risen at all in the past year."

The fears of experts have been compounded by the seeming complexity

of ISAs and the way in which some potential ISA providers, among them Save & Prosper, have been unable to launch products because their computer systems are not yet up to scratch. These worried Sainsbury's Bank to say that it is not at present considering launching its own ISA.

So, less than one week into "ISA-land", is all the doom and gloom justified? The evidence is patchy, but

things don't appear to be as bad as they might be. On Thursday, Standard Life, a leading life insurer, announced that within 48 hours of the ISA's formal launch, it had already switched 18,000 of its existing PEP customers' monthly contributions into the new savings vehicle. In addition, it has fielded 3,000 enquiries from prospective customers on its ISA product range.

Alan Burton, managing director of Citigate

mutual funds at Standard Life, says: "The initial response clearly doesn't compare with the level of activity seen during the last few weeks of the PEP season, but it is still very encouraging. There are clear signs that ISAs are encouraging new savers."

National Savings, which also offered a competitive ISA savings account, reported 7,000 account openings, worth £10m, on Wednesday alone. Further evidence of the potential for ISAs also came from NatWest, whose survey shows that 43 per cent of people are considering investing in one.

This may sound like music to the Government's ears, but it is worth noting that the bulk of ISA investments for the foreseeable future are likely to be straight switches from existing cash-based savings accounts into ISA-linked accounts, where no tax need be paid on the interest.

Equity-linked ISAs are likely to remain a minority interest for some months to come, while providers struggle to get their systems up and running and to turn their PEP investors into ISA groupies. Under such circumstances, it is likely that choice, a key condition of any equity-linked investment, is likely to be more limited, in terms of available fund management groups, for some time to come.

Roddy Kohn, an independent financial adviser at Bristol-based Kohn Cougar, says: "My advice to clients is that, where they can, they should break from the cycle of last-minute investment seen at the end of every tax year. That means starting to make regular premium payments now."

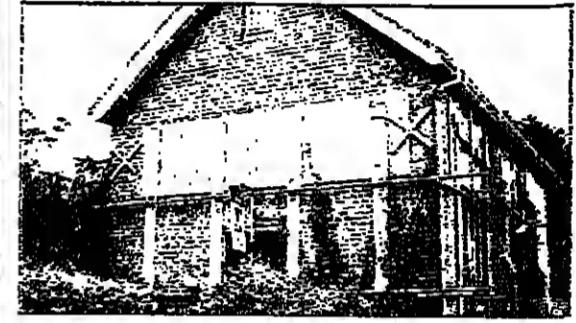
The problem is that not all funds-management groups have said exactly what they are launching. While there are plenty of good ISA-linked funds available now, it is probably wiser to wait for a few weeks while we find out what all the providers are likely to do."

Until then, the experts advise taking advantage of some excellent rates available from cash-linked ISAs. One important caveat is where an investor wants to maximise his or her holding in equities: setting up a cash-based "mini-ISA" will prevent them from placing all of their £7,000 entitlement for 1999/2000 into shares.

Either way, ISAs are here to stay - and the evidence is that Mr Rawal may have made a little history after all.

The birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

### BARGAINS OF THE WEEK

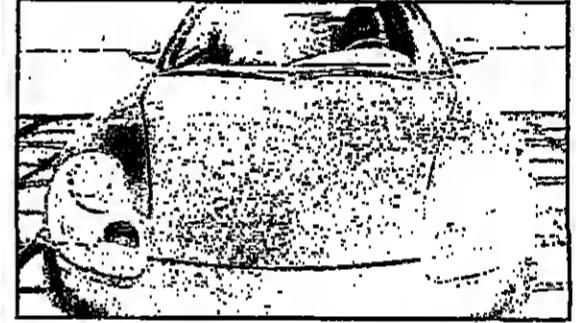


#### Property of the week

IT'S ONLY the scaffolding that's holding it up, so you would have to knock it down and start again, but planning permission has been given to turn the old Mission Hall in Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight, into a three-bedroom home.

Whoever takes it on will have to salvage and re-use some of the existing materials, so the resulting house will not look too different. Popular with yachting sorts, Bembridge has a reputation for being expensive, so there will be no shortage of offers for this old place at £39,950. Fully restored, it could be worth around £100,000. It's just a 10-minute walk to the sea and there are views to Culver Down. There is no garage, but street parking is not a problem, say the agents The Wright Estate Agency. Ring 01983 866 822 for details.

ROSALIND RUSSELL



#### Car of the week

IF YOU are a real car enthusiast, then a Porsche 911 is something that you really ought to drive, or at the very least own once in your motoring life. The design is timeless, although the handling borders on the suicidal in the hands of a novice.

Putting the engine in the rear might be questionable, but there is no escaping the stunning performance, or classic design. The trouble is that Porsche 911s can be frighteningly expensive. As a result, UK dealers are importing more left-hand-drive Porsches than ever.

Adrian Crawford (01752 840307) realises what fine value they are and has a 1984 Carrera in green which has covered 110,000 miles with a full service history. The price, at just £12,495, means a saving of some £4,000 on a right-hand-drive example.

JAMES RUPPERT



#### Deal of the week

OK, SO everyone's offering free Internet access nowadays. But there is only one access provider which does so while providing financial information at the same time. The service provider set up earlier this year is Investors Financial Network or InFinNet.

Even more distinctive is the way InFinNet uses other computer tools, such as CD-roms, to deliver even more information. The logic behind this move is that most computer users do not have equipment powerful enough to handle quality videos from the Internet.

InFinNet's latest offering is a CD of video-based interviews with London stockbrokers on investment-related topics. To sign up, contact www.infinnet.co.uk, or you can obtain the CD free with a copy of April's What Investment magazine and sign up from that.

NIC CICUTTI

### SHOPPING AND DESIGN HAVE MOVED TO THE WEEKEND REVIEW

## How the tax man can help you help others

If the plight of the Kosovar refugees has led you to consider making a donation then a new law is on your side

SMALL DONORS who want to help the Kosovar refugees can make sure the tax man does his bit too, thanks to changes this week in the Millennium Gift Aid rules.

Millennium Gift Aid (MGA) allows qualifying charities to claim back the income tax you have paid on donations as small as £5 a month. For every £100 you give, the tax man adds nearly £20. In order to get the relief, you must give at least £100 by 31 December next year, either in a lump sum or instalments.

Until this week's change, only projects in 80 of the world's poorest countries, such as Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia and Vietnam qualified for MGA. Now the Treasury has said that projects supporting Kosovar refugees anywhere in the world will get it too. Charles Keseru, a spokesman for the Treasury, said: "Now even if they have moved to Germany or the

UK - or anywhere else - Kosovar refugees will be able to benefit."

This week also saw the launch of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), an umbrella body for 12 UK charities working to relieve the Balkan crisis. DEC is intended to last for only a few weeks, but any donations of £100 or more will qualify for MGA.

Charles Grieve, DEC appeals executive, says: "It is brilliant that the £250 limit from the original Gift Aid has come down to £100. We are getting the money in quickly, we are getting it out to our member agencies quickly and they are spending it quickly."

Two of the charities behind the DEC are Oxfam and Save The Children. Yagnesh Patel, direct marketing manager at Save The Children says: "If somebody decides to make a donation to Kosovo, and we can claim Millennium Gift Aid, then that's great. All that

additional tax income is money that we wouldn't otherwise have got."

Oxfam alone will raise extra funds of about £1m - roughly 0.5 per cent of its total income - over the two years MGA is set to run.

Because MGA gets back tax that has already been paid, non-taxpayers' donations do not qualify. The £100 qualifying minimum must all come from one person's donations, ruling out collections of fund-raising events.

You can boost your charitable donations via MGA by any payment method except an anonymous cash donation. The charity to which you give must have your name and address so it can send you an Inland Revenue form to sign and return to confirm the donation is genuine.

The inclusion of Kosovar refugees in MGA will have to be approved by MPs as part of the Finance Bill's

passage through Parliament, but Mr Keseru anticipates no problems with this. The new rules will be worded so that any Kosovo donations made from 6 April 1999 onwards get MGA.

All 12 charities under the DEC umbrella qualify for MGA on relevant projects in their own right, which will now include any work with Kosovar refugees. Simon Collings, Oxfam's head of appeals, says the individual charities will still need donations for this purpose long after DEC has been wound up. "Hopefully, the immediate refugee crisis will be over in a matter of months," he says. "But in a year's time, there's still going to be vital work that needs to be done helping communities resettle and rebuild."

Figures from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees suggest that 400,000 people fled Kosovo in the two weeks to 5 April, with 30,000 crossing

the border during a 12-hour period on Easter Monday alone.

In his Budget last month, Chancellor Gordon Brown announced plans to amend MGA so charities could claim back tax at the basic rate which applied when the first donation from a string of planned instalments was made. This means that instalments that started before 6 April 2000 - when the basic rate falls from 23 per cent to 22 per cent - will continue to get a boost from the tax man of 29.87 for every £100 you give right the way through to 31 December 2000.

Instalments started on, or after, 6 April 2000 will get only 22.30 for every £100 you give.

DEC donations (credit, debit and Charities Aid Foundation cards): 0870 606 0900. See also www.dec.org.uk and ITV Teletext page 520

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# A risky business

Warrants can boost your pain or your gain. By Rachel Fixsen

If you make a killing on a particular share, you will have no regrets, except you might be sorry you did not buy more of them. But there are ways of magnifying potential share gains without increasing your initial outlay. One of these is to invest in warrants.

What are warrants? Well, they are a type of geared investment. Gearing describes the process of increasing your exposure to a certain investment for the same outlay.

Companies become highly geared if they use a large proportion of borrowed money in addition to share capital to fund their operations. Gearing up is a very risky strategy - just as you can magnify your gains, so losses are exaggerated too.

Warrants are securities which give you the right to buy a certain share at a certain price (the exercise or subscription price) before a fixed time in the future.

They can be traded and usually cost only a fraction of the price of the share itself. Often, the exercise price is not far off the share's current price. If this is the case, warrant holders benefit from any rise in that share's price just as they would have done by owning the share, but for a fraction of the cost.

On the market, the price of a particular warrant fluctuates, often exaggerating the underlying share's movements. You can either make money by selling the warrants after a big rise, or by waiting until the warrants can be exercised and then buying the shares that they represent. You then make an instant profit by selling that share at the - hopefully - higher market price.

There is a downside; these are very risky investments indeed. If the share price falls below the strike price, or never even reaches it, then your warrant is worthless. You could lose all the capital you invested.

In effect, when you buy warrants you are betting on future price movements, so you should only invest money you can afford to lose. But there are huge potential gains to be made if you are both daring and well-informed.

One person who has done well is Kean Seager, the chairman at Whitechurch Securities. He says: "I don't simply look for the most risky investment. I start by making normal decisions first. This means looking for the right sector and where prospects look promising."

For example in February 1997, Mr Seager felt the UK equity market was likely to do well. If UK equities were likely to do well, he felt capital shares in split capital investment trusts would do better. Taking the logic of his argument further, he opted for warrants in the capital shares themselves - gearing up on a geared investment.

Mr Seager bought 25,000 warrants in Fleming Income & Growth at 8p each. As of mid-February this year, they were worth 83.5 pence, up 14 times on their original price in under two years. Companies issue warrants as a way of raising finance. But nowadays only smaller companies issue them, which means many warrants



Kean Seager: "I start by making normal decisions."

*Moneywise*

on single company shares are particularly risky. British Aerospace is the only blue chip company which has warrants in issue at the moment.

But many investment trusts also issue warrants. "These are quite good for people to cut their teeth on because the risk is slightly lower," says Andrew McHattie, editor of specialist newsletter *Warrants Alert*.

About 130 of the 190 warrants listed on the London Stock Exchange are investment trust warrants.

You buy warrants through a stockbroker or financial adviser. The cost is the same as dealing in shares; when you come to exercise the warrant there is no fee to pay. But novices to warrants should expect a warning from stockbrokers. "Most brokers won't let you near warrants until you've signed a risk warning notice," says Matthew Orr of stockbrokers Killik & Co.

How do you choose a warrant? Tim Cockerill, of independent advisers Whitechurch Securities in Bristol, advises looking for warrants with a long life. "Anyone who's dabbling in warrants, especially for the first time, should get one with a long life - it's like a safety net," he says.

Perpetual Income & Growth warrants have 7.8 years left to run. "So if everything goes disastrously wrong in the next two years, you still have time for it to recover," Mr Cockerill says.

The warrants cost 37p and the subscription price is £1. Shares in the trust are currently trading at £1.27.

For a more exciting time, Mr Cockerill recommends Foreign & Colonial Latin American warrants which have 6.3 years

left to run. The warrants cost 42p and have a subscription price of £20. With the shares trading at 89p, this means the warrants are now at a premium of 15p - wider than that of the Perpetual warrants.

Other investment trust warrants worth watching are Henderson Technology Trust warrants and TR European Growth Trust warrants, says Andrew McHattie. The Henderson warrants provide exposure to the rapidly expanding technology sector while holders of the TR warrants stand to gain from a recovery in the trust's portfolio.

Should you wait to exercise your warrants, or sell them? If you have managed to double your money in a short time, then this could be a good time to sell them, says Mr Cockerill. "You have to ask yourself what you are going into warrants for," he says. "If it is for a short-term gain, then if you see it, take it." But if you aim for longer term gains, it may be worth waiting to actually exercise the warrant.

Whatever happens, don't forget to exercise them. Warrants have an expiry date, and if this passes before you have exercised them, they automatically become worthless.

This situation has sparked rows between client and broker. "Make it clear who has responsibility for monitoring the warrant," says Mr Orr.

Warrants are widely seen as a dying market in the UK. "A lot of them tended to be issued on Far East trusts, and they fell out of bed," says Gideon Foster of brokers Wise Speke. Although few major companies now issue warrants, there

is a huge market in Europe for covered warrants, which are linked to more established shares but are issued by third parties.

However, covered warrants cannot be traded on the London Stock Exchange, and the dealing costs are usually too high for smaller investors.

In some senses, warrants can be a way of making your money work twice, says Matthew Orr. Because warrants cost a fraction of a share price, the remaining cash can accrue interest in a bank or building society account. But holders of warrants do not get the dividends shareholders do. "If that share is a big dividend payer, then you've got to factor that in," Mr Orr says.

And although you do risk losing all your money when you buy warrants, there is a more positive way of looking at it. This is the only money you stand to lose. "If you'd bought the security, you could, in theory, watch the thing go bust," says Mr Orr.

*Warrants Alert: 0117 925882; Whitechurch Securities: 0117 9442266; Killik & Co: 0171-761 4400*

*'The Independent' is offering a free 'Guide to High Risk/High Reward Investment', which outlines the most common ways in which savers can obtain higher than average returns on their funds, including warrants, by taking a more aggressive approach with their money. Your free copy of the guide, which is sponsored by Whitechurch Securities, is available by calling 0845 2711003.*

SOME FANCIFUL souls have likened the Internet to a gold rush in the Wild West. A cattle stampede might be a more accurate analogy. But while we may argue about descriptions, there is no disagreement about the fact that financial regulation is lagging behind technological development.

The Treasury's consultation document issued last month on financial promotion sets out, in part, to redress the balance. The current regime asserts jurisdiction over every website accessible in the UK containing advertisements relating to investments or investment services.

However, before the Financial Services Authority (FSA) sets out to take on the world it has set itself a series of guidance factors on whether to take enforcement action.

Among these self-imposed hurdles are whether the website is located in the UK, the extent to which the



## INTERNET INVESTOR ROBIN AMLÔT

underlying service is available to UK investors and, perhaps most importantly, the extent to which the advert is directed at persons in the UK.

The suggestion is that there should be "an exemption from the financial promotion regime for promotions issued from overseas, which, although available in the UK, are not 'directed' at the UK". Quite how you go about defining

the bottom line is this and is admitted as such:

"UK investors who visit overseas Web sites which promote stocks on various international securities markets might not be protected under UK law."

One other point. We are constantly told to check the small print. Be warned: in future the small print may not actually appear on Web advertisements.

The consultation document says on this subject: "All promotional material must contain all the relevant information or be clearly connected to such information." This seems an open invitation to put all the worrisome warnings on another page that people may not bother to view.

Now let us move on. Global Investor is running a competition inviting you to predict the share price of Amazon.com on 30 April. First prize is a balloon flight with a champagne breakfast, plus \$1,000 worth of investment tools.

You have until midnight on 23 April to enter. Here

are a few pointers: last year Amazon lost \$124 million, up from \$81 million in 1997; its share price has climbed from \$13 a year ago to a peak of \$199 in January 1999 before slipping back.

The first 100 runners-up will receive a copy of *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, by Charles Mackay, and a bright red panic button for their computer keyboard.

The book, written in 1841, remains the definitive work on moaney manias. The button has no real function, but, for investors who fail to anticipate the inevitable correction in Internet stock prices, it will be as effective as any other action!

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**NORWICH AND** Peterborough Building Society is launching a cash ISA for existing and new customers, paying 6.75 per

cent variable rate of interest (guaranteed to be equal to UK base rates until April 2001). Minimum investment for existing customers is £1,000 or £3,000 for new ones. Also available is a Tessa-only ISA, for maturing Tessas. Again, the rate paid is 6.75 per cent, with a minimum investment of £100 for existing clients and £1,000 for new ones (01733 362636).

**NATIONWIDE IS** is offering a cash ISA, the Members' ISA Bond, which pays 6.5 per cent on balances of £1 or more for existing members of the society. They guarantee to pay at least 1 per cent above base rates until 5 April 2001. Details from any Nationwide branch.

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## The need for assurance

Few companies are offering life assurance as part of an ISA. Tony Lyons finds out why

**O**ne of the great surprises with Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) is to find that only a small number of managers of the new tax-efficient savings plans are prepared to offer life assurance. In fact, some of the biggest life offices have already stated that they will not be offering any life policies even with their Maxi-ISAs.

Under the ISA rules, up to £1,000 a year per person can be invested in life assurance, with neither income nor capital gains tax payable on the underlying fund or the policy proceeds. In addition, a 10 per cent tax credit is claimed by the fund on the dividends of UK shares held in respect of ISA policies and paid before the end of the tax year in 2004.

Coin Ledi of Standard Life, for example, claims: "Customer research carried out by us showed conclusively that there was little demand for life assurance. In fact, it showed that while there was a lot of confusion about ISAs in general, people saw them as investment and savings products, not for protection." Other big life offices and investment houses (including Scottish Widows, CGU, Equitable Life, Legal & General, Royal & Sun Alliance) have followed this line and have already announced that their ISAs will not offer any life assurance element.

So far, only a handful will be offering this element. They are likely to be joined by some of the friendly societies when they announce their plans. Tumblebridge Life Equities will be offering a with-profits bond investment while Liverpool & Victoria is expected to announce its ISA range in June and its insurance element is likely to be an endowment policy with premi-

ums starting at £30 a month, just above the maximum limit for friendly society tax-exempt savings plans.

"We wanted to offer our investors the full ISA range" says Gug Kyriacou of Abbey National. "We know that many of them do not want to invest in equities, preferring the idea of with-profits policies that smooth out the peaks and troughs of the market. We've had over 20,000 requests for the video we offer our investors that explains our ISAs, so we know that there is plenty of demand out there."

At present, most of the providers of life assurance ISAs are taking a similar path to Abbey National and offering a variant of the with-profits bond. "It is very difficult to provide a version of the conventional with-profits endowment policy," says David Mott of the Co-operative Insurance Society. "The with-profits bond, however, is designed to be a halfway house between a building society account and equities. The initial bonus rate will be 4 per cent better than most deposit accounts, and includes a special 0.5 per cent first-anniversary bonus or cash contributions paid before 6 April 2000. We believe this bond is suitable for those savers who like the relatively low risk of with-profits plans."

Norwich Union, however, found from its research that people did want a type of with-profits endowment that could be included in an ISA. "We found that many savers were fed up with the returns they were receiving from notice and deposit accounts but were unhappy about investing directly in equities," says the company's Martin Chapman. "Insurance ISAs bridge this gap for those averse to risk."

More to the point, Norwich Union perceives that many potential investors could use its insurance ISA to pay their mortgages. "Even today,

some 80 per cent of borrowers use some sort of savings plan to repay the capital on their mortgages," adds Mr Chapman. "PEPs mortgages never really took off as they were seen as highly volatile and risky. We have developed our life assurance ISA as a mortgage repayment vehicle for those who take out interest-only home loans. We estimate that the £23-a-month maximum premium per individual is enough to pay off a £52,000 mortgage over 25 years - £100,000 for a couple."

The Government may have stated that ISAs are only guaranteed to be around for 10 years, but as Mr Chapman points out, there was never any guarantee about how long PEPs would be around and this did not stop providers offering PEP mortgage repayment plans.

The insurance ISA is designed for long-term savers, not those who want quick access to their money," says Peter Beauvan of Pearl Assurance. He is surprised that so many providers have opted not to include life assurance in their ISAs. "It's hard to work out what's behind this. I suspect the real truth is that many companies have IT problems. It took a long time for the Government to announce its ISA details, too long for them to put the right systems into place for them to have an insurance ISA at the start."

Whether through endowment or bond, all the providers will be offering unilised-with-profits. This means that it will be easier for the investor to keep an eye on the value of their insurance ISA. But none of them will have CAT marks, because the providers found that they could not offer a minimum premium of £25 a month or £250 a year with a maximum charge of 3 per cent, nor can they offer surrender values at least equal to a full return of premiums after three years.



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Norwich Union (tel: 0800 0362450)	W profit endowment initial 0.575%	£25 a month	5% monthly policy fee 5%
Pearl (tel: 01733 470470)	W profit endowment	£30 a month	3.3% annual
Scottish Amicable (0141 249 2323)	W profit bond account or annual charge	£50 a month	5% initial bond rate taken
Scottish Friendly (tel: 0141 275 5000)	W profit bond	£30 a month or £500	5% initial, 1% annual

## The CAT fight brewing in the world of ISAs

The Government's efforts to simplify investment could lead to even more confusion. By Katharine Lewis

AT FIRST glance, the new Government initiative called CAT standards sounds like a promotion against cruelty to animals sponsored by the RSPCA.

A CATmark is actually a label that financial services companies can use to show their Individual Savings Account (ISA) complies with certain standards. The Government's idea is to give guidance to new or unsophisticated investors. But many financial experts fear that the CATmarked ISA product will cause a lot of confusion. At its worst, CATmarks could lead to another scandal of misguided buying like the personal pensions disaster the industry is sorting out at the moment, or so it is alleged.

CAT stands for charges, access and terms. Each ISA product with a CATmark must meet the standards for each of these terms,

which vary depending on whether the ISA invests in cash, stocks and shares or insurance.

In general the label shows that the charges are particularly low and that investors can access their money at any time and without penalty. The pricing of the fund's units must be simple to understand and the minimum investment must be low.

The CAT standards for an ISA investing in stocks and shares, for example, require the ISA to have no initial charge and a total annual charge of no more than 1 per cent. The minimum lump-sum investment must be no more than £500 and the minimum regular savings investment must be set no higher than £50 a month. The units of the fund must be quoted at a single price, rather than the confusing bid/offer spread used by unit trusts in PEPs in the past.

All this seems very worthwhile. The CAT standard is aimed at sparking greater interest in the stockmarket and collective investments, but according to Autif (the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds) this is exactly the problem.

Philip Warland, director general of Autif says: "CAT standards are like electricity. Potentially, they are very good and useful, but if you handle them wrong you will get burnt. Because of this, we are strongly against them."

Mr Warland believes that while CATmarked ISAs offer security against crippling charges, they can offer no guarantee of performance. But the public may not understand this distinction. "And evidence shows there is not a lot of correlation between cost and performance in unit trusts," he adds.

Mr Warland fears that CATmarked ISAs could lead to a misguidance scandal because most of these products will be sold directly to the public and not through independent financial advisers. Investors will therefore not be getting advice about performance. This is because the low CAT charges cannot supply enough income to pay advisers for giving advice to their customers.

Many PEP providers agree with Autif's stance on ISAs and have decided not to launch CATmarked products. "We think most investors need advice, so we are not going to launch a CAT product. Moreover, I think CAT standards will confuse investors. ISAs are complicated enough already," says Roger Cornick, marketing director at Perpetual, a leading fund management firm.

But Virgin disagrees. It has launched a CAT-standard ISA based on its FTSE All-Share tracker. "We want all our ISAs to be CATmarked. We are 100 per cent committed to CAT standards," says Gordon Maw, marketing manager at Virgin.

Mr Maw believes that knowing that charges will not be excessive will take out one of the risk elements, leaving investors free to decide about performance.

Mr Warland concedes that CAT standards are useful for cash funds because they guarantee an interest rate that is not less than two percentage points below the base rate. "But," he says, "there is no way you can create a CAT standard for stocks and shares ISAs that takes performance into account because, as all investment companies say, the past is no guide to the future."

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# Is your portfolio in the right team?

You may not be able to add to your PEPs, but now the decision is whether to transfer or consolidate. By Rachel Fixsen

**TOO LATE** – your last chance to put money into a Personal Equity Plan has gone. But with more than £200m already tucked away in PEPs, the battle between financial services providers to get their hands on your investment has only just begun.

It has always been possible to transfer your PEP from one investment fund to another and even from one provider to another; although there are certain restrictions.

For instance, moving money between funds run by a single PEP manager is quite easy; but if you are transferring to another manager, you have to move one whole tax year's general PEP at a time, even though this might be split between different investments.

And some providers "bundle" plans taken out in different tax years, making them impossible to separate; in these cases, you have to move all or nothing.

Many investors have shifted PEPs from one manager to another in the past, but now that PEP funds cannot be added to, transfer activity could bot up.

"Quite a lot of PEP investors have five or six years' of PEPs under their belt, and they are now starting to review them – in the early years, they weren't too concerned," says Philip Warland, director general of the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds.

PEP providers have been pulling out all the stops in the last few

months to capture investment capital in the last PEP year. In that competition, the most that was at stake was £6,000 per person, but in the battle for PEP transfers the sums are much larger, running into tens of thousands of pounds for each individual.

"There will be continued rumblings in the market," says Mr Warland.

Although PEPs are now closed to new money, they have been replaced by a very similar investment vehicle – the Individual Savings Account. Overall annual investment limits are lower than for PEPs, but ISAs do allow a much broader spread of investment.

However, financial services providers are still unsure how popular ISAs will be, and until they really take off, the fight over existing PEP funds will go on.

There are many reasons why a PEP holder might want to transfer. You could just be dissatisfied with your PEP provider. Or you might have been investing for capital growth at the beginning, but now need an income stream, particularly if you are retiring. There may be no satisfactory income fund available from your current PEP manager.

If you have a substantial portfolio of PEPs where a large proportion is with one fund manager, you might want to spread your risk by shifting some funds to a different manager. Or if your PEPs are scattered



Alan Shearer is not the only investment with a fantastic transfer value

between different providers you might try to cut the paperwork by consolidating them under one provider – though not into the same fund.

Janice Thomson, of discount

broker Chelsea Financial Services, warns against transferring PEP funds unless there is a very good reason for it. Valid reasons might be because your requirements have changed, because you want to

change the geographical or sectoral balance of your portfolio or because your fund is consistently out performed by other similar funds, she says.

Stay put if you can, because

transferring can be very expensive. If you are just switching to chase better investment performance, the move can prove counterproductive. PEP transfers are usually treated as new business and the initial fee can be as much as 5 per cent. There may also be a transfer charge and commission.

Transfers into Capel-Cure Myers' unit trust PEP, for example, is very expensive. There is a 5 per cent initial charge and this added to the transfer charge and commission cuts 6.9 per cent off the value of the investment, according to Money Management, a specialist publication.

However, some PEP managers encourage transfers by waiving the initial charge. Direct PEP providers such as Direct Line, Equitable and Virgin Direct make no initial charge or commission on money transferred into their PEPs, neither does Legal & General.

If you want someone to make the decisions for you on your PEP investments, you could opt for a fund of funds PEP. Henderson Investors offers its Transfer PEP where you can choose between an income or growth portfolio or a mixture of the two. The PEP is linked to Henderson's fund of funds unit trusts.

"Clients will continue to receive a spread of investment styles and investment houses," says Sarah Speake of Henderson Investors. Each fund of funds typically invests

in between 12 and 20 different funds. Though funds of funds always involve a double layer of charges, Ms Speake says Henderson is able to negotiate discounts.

There is no initial charge for PEP transfers.

If you do want to make a change, you should first consider whether your existing PEP manager has another fund which would be better. This is the quickest and cheapest way to change your portfolio, says Janice Thomson. "This way you are not out of the market for a long period when you might lose out to market fluctuations," she says.

Transfers often take an unacceptably long time, she warns. If you just want to simplify your PEPs but keep the actual investments the same, an umbrella PEP provider such as Skandia or Eurolife can make sense. Skandia's MultiPEP offers access to 98 funds run by different investment managers including Fidelity, Perpetual and M&G.

"You have to consider whether it's a service worth paying for," says Janice Thomson. It can cost an extra 0.5 per cent a year. These services can help those investing for income who find it hard to keep track of the various cheques coming in.

But they become expensive if you or your adviser show no more interest in researching new investment opportunities and actively switching funds in your portfolio during each tax year.

## Who can you trust with your unit trust transfers?

Making good judgements about your potential investments is never easy. Let our panellists offer you some guidance. By Iain Morse

**HOW DO** you choose one unit trust against another, and when should you switch holdings? The Independent asked three independent financial advisers to recommend funds to sell and buy in three of the most popular unit trust sectors: UK Growth, UK Equity Income and UK Smaller Companies.

We don't look often or critically enough at our existing investments, so a little caution is needed if you decide to sell and then buy. This is not a cost-free exercise. If you are trying to add how much cash you will raise from encashing a unit trust, remember to base your calculation on the "offer" price, or the amount per unit you will be paid by the trust

manager when redeeming your units. If you are buying into a fund you will pay the "bid" price, which will be higher than the offer price.

This bid/offer spread is typically around 5 per cent. Treat this spread as the true cost of your investment.

**Jason Hollands, BESt**

**Investment, London**

The real art of sound investment is to make the right judgement about future performance. There are plenty of good examples of former "star" funds that waned or became "dogs" following changes of personnel. Follow the manager, not the fund name. Lazarus's UK Equity Income fund is an example of this and their one-time

star performer. This has drifted since fund manager Tim Russell was poached by HSBC.

It is not yet a dog, but performance has suffered. Holders of the fund should consider a transfer to Colin Moreton's BWD UK Equity Income fund, a trust which has managed to beat the All Share Index in each one of the last five years. In the UK Growth sector, we recommend

holders of M&G's British Opportunities Fund consider a switch, as this sector has underperformed in the last five years. I would consider a move to Jeremy Lang's River & Mercantile First Growth Fund, which has beaten the All Share index annually for the last five years.

**Don Clark, Torquil Clark,**

**Wolverhampton**

Among UK Equity Income funds I would come out of Lincoln's Income fund, which has failed to produce even average returns; it has been consistently third and often fourth quartile in its sector. Instead

buy Jupiter's Income Trust, managed by William Littlewood, producing top quartile returns over one, three and five years. This fund is worth over £1bn with strong core holdings, but also many small bets.

Among UK Growth funds, sell Sovereign's UK Growth. It has shown superb consistency, but over five years it has been fourth quartile. Investors have seen it grow by 26 per cent over five years, against a sector average of 56 per cent.

Buy Save & Prosper's Premier Equity Growth instead. The fund style is one of risk control. Performance has been consistently strong, better than the FTSE All Share over the last six years. A good bal-

ance of performance and risk management, UK Smaller Companies are always a difficult sector to judge. I would sell Martin Currie UK Smaller Companies, and buy Gartmore's UK Smaller Companies instead.

**Anthony Yagdaroff, Allen**

**Direct, London**

In the UK Equity Income sector, I would transfer out of Baillie Gifford's Income fund which has done poorly, returning just 35.7 per cent against sector average returns over three years of 60.6 per cent. Consider Fidelity's Income Plus fund, run by Tim McCarron. This has returned 84.2 per cent over the same period, managed on a stock-picking basis,

with emphasis on dividend growth and reduced volatility.

The UK Equity Growth sector has shown average returns of 60.6 per cent over the last three years, with market conditions not unfavourable to fund managers. Why, then, has Murray's Blue Chip fund managed a return of only 4.62 per cent? Transfer out to Britannia's Balanced Growth fund, which has grown 70.8 per cent over the same period.

I would sell Lloyd's Bank Small Companies & Recovery fund; this has returned just 14.7 per cent over 3 years against a sector return of 45 per cent. Much the same is true of M&G's Smaller Companies fund, growing by just 8.8 per cent.

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**Legal & General**



# The green movement

These days buyers want more outside space – and developers are taking note. By Mary Wilson



The interior of one of the Westfield apartments



A model of the new Westfield development in north London

**P**eople buying new homes are not only interested in the size of the property they are buying, they are also looking at what outside space is available. And with summer soon upon us, any properties – whether houses or apartments – which have access to decent-sized communal gardens are selling like hot cakes.

Ian and Gina Dwyer have bought a five-bedroom wing of Henley Park, near Guildford, Surrey, which has 27 acres of private grounds. Henan Country Homes has converted a derelict Jacobean manor house into four large homes and is building six new detached houses, three news houses and a pair of attached cottages in the grounds.

"We came from a detached house in Hampshire and we wanted something with character but without the problems of an old house," Mrs Dwyer says.

"We have two children, aged eight and 10 and they need a lot of room to grow up in, so this was absolutely perfect. There is plenty of space for them to run around and ample trees to climb."

The Dwyers have a portion of private land, which they like, but the best thing is that they do not have to take responsibility for the rest of the grounds. The approach to the development is through electronic gates, down a tree-lined drive and the view from the properties is magnificent.

The communal grounds include an arboretum, a meadow of wild flowers and a tennis court. The remaining eight properties, which are available through the agent, Browns, are priced from £225,000 for a three-bedroom cottage up to £335,000 for a five-bedroom house. The two remaining three- to four-bedroom homes in the manor house are priced at £355,000 and £360,000.

In London, or in any city, buying in a development which has large communal gardens is even more attractive and there are several properties now on the market which show that outside space is a major selling point.

At Westfield, in one of the busier and more built-up parts of Hampstead off Finchley Road in north

London, nine blocks of large luxury apartments are being built by Rialto Homes in the old four-acre gardens that belonged to Westfield College. Each block takes the name of one of the trees found on the site and as many specimen trees as possible are being preserved. About two-and-a-half acres of open space will remain. Most of this is being landscaped and there is also a courtyard with a water feature and seating area.

"One of the more significant aspects of Westfield is its very large open space, which is unusual for this area," says Neville Casingen of Goldschmidt & Howland, which is selling the development jointly with FPD Savills. Prices in the first phase of 27 two- and three-bedroom apartments range from £300,000 to £350,000.

*'There are several properties on the market which show that outside space is a selling point'*

Lockes Wharf, a seven-and-a-half-acre site being developed by St George in London's Docklands, will have 421 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and 40 three- and four-bedroom town houses. About a quarter of the development will be open space with two large formal landscaped gardens with fountains, plus an ornamental water garden and a public riverside walk.

"Purchasers want to feel they are not living on top of one another," says Simon Osborne of Knight Frank, who is based at the sales office at the development. Currently available are two penthouses with two bedrooms for £239,950, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments from £159,950 to £224,950 and one three-bedroom town house for £229,950.

Much further west, but also on the Thames, is Harrods Village, which is being built by Berkeley Homes (Thames Valley). "This development is a Mecca for those who love gardening and the outdoors," says Jeff Parton, managing director of the development firm. "Gardening has become a leading leisure activity and

as a result homeowners and developers are looking at maximising the size of their gardens."

Careful attention has therefore been given to creating as much horticultural interest as possible with limes and Japanese cherry trees being planted around the properties. On top of the leisure centre there will be a large roof garden that will extend to gardens beside the centre. Along the river is yet another open green area that will be landscaped.

The development is part new buildings and part conversion. There will be 127 new apartments and town houses, along with cottages and apartments overlooking all this open space,

which will be private to the residents.

It will be seeded to meadow grass for people to enjoy looking at and wandering in, although dogs will only be allowed in the park if they are kept on a lead. There will also be a formal area with a gazebo. Properties still to be sold include a selection of two-bedroom apartments from £265,000 to £295,000 and one two-bedroom cottage for £250,000.

*Further information: Browns, 01483 531166; Goldschmidt & Howland, 0171-435 4404; FPD Savills, 0171-472 5000; Lockes Wharf, 0171-531 6280; Harrods Village, 0181-731 7401; Wethered Park, 01628 4730700.*

depository buildings are being turned into 123 apartments. Prices for properties currently available range from £295,500 for a new two-bedroom apartment up to £537,500 for a three-bedroom refurbished apartment. Sixty-two apartments are due to be released in the riverfront depository building in May.

To find three acres of grassland in the centre of a popular place like Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, is highly unusual, but this is what is being offered at Wethered Park. Charles Church has built a highly attractive crescent of town houses along with cottages and apartments overlooking all this open space,

which will be private to the residents.

It will be seeded to meadow grass for people to enjoy looking at and wandering in, although dogs will only be allowed in the park if they are kept on a lead. There will also be a formal area with a gazebo. Properties still to be sold include a selection of two-bedroom apartments from £265,000 to £295,000 and one two-bedroom cottage for £250,000.

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renovation, making it difficult to get a mortgage. "We borrowed from friends to do the basic work but it was a very dicey time."

The family stayed until 1996 when they decided that they wanted another child and more space. "We knew that we'd made money but you couldn't swing a cat and the area was going up quickly," Liz began her search, this time single-mindedly. "To make a leap we had to go for another wreck and I didn't want a normal house with two through rooms and a kitchen out the back."

After selling their house for £99,000, their estate agent had just one house on the books which could satisfy Liz's requirements. "On paper it had everything: five bedrooms, garage, big garden and conservatory," she said. "It was cheap, £105,000, so we thought it had to be all right."

When they went to view it, they found something they had not expected. The house had had its facade replaced with metal windows, a PVC door and pebble dash. "It was hideous," she said, "but anything is possible with a builder and we had to have it."

The couple have transformed the interior and are about to replace the facade. Once the work is complete, they estimate the house's value at around £300,000. They have no plans to move. "We're exhausted and we'll drop dead here."

**GINETTA VEDRICKAS**

**Those moves in brief**  
**1984:** bought three-bedroom flat for £52,000, sold for £61,000.  
**1993:** bought a four-bedroom house for £90,000, sold for £115,000 later that year.

Bought a four-bedroom cottage for £51,000, sold for £99,000.

**1996:** bought five-bedroom house for £105,000, worth around £300,000 when finished.

*If you would like your moves to be featured write to:  
Nic Cicutt, Stepping Stones,  
One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. £100  
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## STEPPING STONES

ONE WOMAN'S PROPERTY STORY



Old houses are right up Liz Keyworth's street

LIZ KEYWORTH, an artist, has bought four properties in East Dulwich, south London, but it was not her first choice of location. "I was on the brink of buying a pretty house in Brixton thinking it was trendy, but thieves broke in and stole the fireplaces," she says. "After squatters defaced it I decided to head for safer, more reliable East Dulwich."

In 1984, Liz paid £52,000 for a first-floor flat with access to a garden via a spiral staircase. "I'd been given £5,000 and thought I should buy somewhere and get lodgers in to pay the mortgage, leaving me free to paint," she says.

The plan worked. Liz's mortgage was helped by "two French boys in one room and a Japanese girl in another" and her career benefited. "I didn't have to worry and it left me free to spend months painting in France." In 1991 she considered selling when the flat was valued at £94,000. A year later she was pregnant and in a relationship, and because "spiral staircases and babies don't mix", she decided to sell the property that was now valued at just £56,000.

Liz advertised the flat herself and sold to the first person to reply for £64,000 – not the giddy heights of a year earlier but the experience left her cynical about estate agents: "It shows that they undervalue in order to sell."

By spring 1993 she had found a semi-detached house for £90,000, with four bedrooms and an attic for a studio. Liz transformed the garden and began work on the house: "I got a builder to install a hand-built kitchen, decorate and make the place bright and cheery."

Liz loved her much-improved house but also found herself in love with the builder. "He was so less than a year later, she sold for £115,000. "We could have got more but it was a difficult situation and I was in a desperate hurry to sell."

With her share Liz was forced to "take a downward leap" and, with her builder, bought a "cottage four-bedroom house" for £51,000, which again needed total

# The customer comes last

Thousands of estate agents have failed to join an Ombudsman scheme. By Penny Jackson

ESTATE AGENTS have come in for some fierce criticism in the past week or so. A year after the Ombudsman scheme was widened, and even though it was hailed as a big step towards improving standards of customer care, the vast majority have failed to sign up. David Quayle, the Ombudsman for Estate Agents, is an appointed man.

"We have gone 15 months and are still lacking the bulk to give us credibility and to give the consumer the choice he needs," he says. Out of a possible 10,000 or so high street offices only 2,759 have joined. Mr Quayle sees a membership of 5,000 as a critical figure in tipping the balance towards expediency. "I am clear that the future for any decent firm selling any product is to give consumers access to non-legal redress. If more do not sign up this year serious consideration will be given to making it statutory."

His words might be regarded as a warning to an industry that is already experiencing a growing consensus in favour of some form of licensing and mandatory standards of competence.

A requirement of the OEA scheme is that a firm must have links with the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers (ISVA).

Anyone can complain to the Ombudsman and there is maximum compensation of £50,000. Last

year complaints within his remit rose 16 per cent. The largest award of £4,250 was made to a couple who were forced to pay an extra £4,000 after the agent had told the seller, wrongly, that they were unable to go ahead with their agreed purchase.

The Ombudsman also made awards of £1,000 for room dimensions that had been seriously miscalculated and £100 when an estate agent failed to spot that the seller had no planning permission for off-street parking.

So how can it work? David Bedford, of Bedfords, in Bury St Edmunds, is in no doubt that being a subscriber to the scheme takes the heat out of any potential dispute. "Two or three times during the year when there has been a problem we have written to clients and stressed that if they remain unhappy they can take it further."

Nobody has, but it helps convince them that we are serious about resolving their complaint. We use the OEA logo on all our advertisements and notepaper."

Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, the chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, which has the largest contingent on the scheme, also feels frustrated at the slow take-up, particularly as he favours the voluntary route. "Agents have not recognised its benefits in promoting their commitment to high standards. Even in the best run organisations, small or large, things can go wrong, and surely the con-

sumer is entitled to some sort of consideration? Sellers should be more discerning in their choice of agent."

One of David Quayle's chief disappointments is that along with a large corporate group none of the top 30 estate agents has joined up. "They would send a powerful message in support of the image of estate agencies even though they perceive themselves as not needing the scheme. They would be seen as ambassadors for the highest possible standards." Among that group are many who operate to the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Ruaraidh Adams-Cairns, the director of FPD Savills, says that the RICS regulation is already demanding and protects the client with its own arbitration mechanism. It was not deemed necessary to take on more.

He says: "We make an enormous effort in dealing with customer complaints, whatever the issue. People rightly feel very angry if, say, they turn up to a view a house and no one is there. It's important to address the complaint immediately. I have sent out flowers as an apology for a missed appointment."

However, at the RICS they are far from sanguine about their members' dismissal of the Ombudsman scheme. An admonishing letter is on its way, urging them to join up. "We think it is the right way to move the whole industry forward," says Patricia Monahan, from the RICS

standards and practice department.

But perhaps the one area in most urgent need of policing and yet not covered by the Ombudsman is the rental sector. The numbers of complaints received by David Quayle over the past year has convinced him that lettings and management should be included.

One London landlord and his tenants would regard it as not before time. Abbey Commercial Investments, in Clapham, south-west London, put one of its few residential properties, a flat in Kensington, in the hands of an agent in west London. A director of the company says he has never come across such unprofessional behaviour.

He says: "They were very keen to get the tenants in even before the flat was ready and that was because the man did not want to miss his bonus payment. But worse was that, in order not to cause a delay, the agreements that the tenants and I signed were not the same."

"Each thought the other was responsible for the water rates, which is the stuff of dispute. But even more shocking was my first encounter with the young letting agent. He asked whether I wanted to sell and so I asked him to come up with a figure. He offered me a great deal less than I knew it was worth, saying he wanted to buy it for himself and went on about having a new baby. It breaks every rule in the book, but when I complained to the firm I never even got a reply."



"Surely the consumer is entitled to some form of protection"

Ian Torrance

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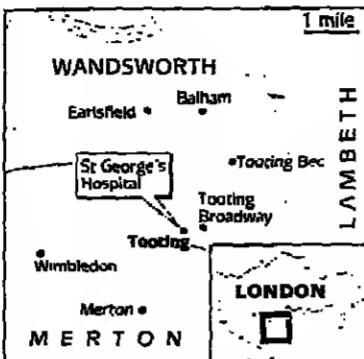
# Tooting: the popular front

**S**ubtlety is not Tooting's strong point. Not only does this south-London area have more than its fair share of cemeteries and hospitals, but each of its two large hospitals has an adjacent cemetery so close as to seem part of the medical facility itself. This does not exactly inspire confidence.

There are Tootings galore. Near Upper Tooting is Tooting Bec, followed by Tooting Broadway, both of which are on the Underground and both of which are south of Balham in roughly half-mile increments. Further south is Tooting Graveneys, which sounds like more hospital-cemetery shenanigans but is actually a family name. If you want a Tooting in its pure, unmodified state, you'll have to hang round the railway station at the southern boundary of the area.

Tooting is surrounded by pricey neighbours which, these days, includes Earlsfield as well as the usual suspects, Wandsworth, Clapham, Balham and Wimbledon. Tooting is attracting overspill from these areas, in addition to buoyant local demand.

"Tooting is much cheaper than Balham," says Dorian Black of Peterman estate agents. "Investors are attracted because the Tube brings in



undoubtedly be of benefit to locals."

According to Mr Black: "The primary schools here are good, the secondary are fantastic in Tooting Bec, and there are several preparatory and private schools comprising two or three houses which have been knocked together. And Graveneys is good for primary schools."

For good value, Mr Black recommends "the area on and around Franciscan Road. It is very close to everything and the houses are bigger and better kept."

If money is tight, he suggests an ex-council flat: "There are some local authority blocks along Garratt Lane and also on Tooting High Street. They are pretty grim in architecture."

The walkways are on the outside, for example, but the council has recently done a lot to improve them. Many of them have been bought privately, but on certain blocks a majority are still owned by the council. The private owners bought their flats with the sole purpose of letting them out.

Tooting is "not trendy yet - but it will be," says Mr Black, confidently. "We handle commercial as well as residential property, and we are now getting enquiries about wine bars. Ethnically, Tooting is a bit like the United Nations."

ROBERT LIEBMAN



Tooting: 'Not trendy yet, but it will be'

## THE LOW-DOWN

**Prices:** One- or two-bed ex-council flats are available for £40-£55,000; three bedrooms for £60,000. One-bedroom conversions sell for £70,000, and two-bedrooms go for £80-£90,000.

Houses are priced between £100,000 and £140,000 but can go higher - much higher - for larger properties of proximity to Wandsworth or the Beaver Estate, east of Balham High Road. The area also contains large, purpose-built period maisonettes.

A Hospital too Far: Fairview's Heritage Park is rising on the site of the area's third major medical institution, the former Tooting Bec Hospital, across from the two commons (Tooting Bec and Tooting Graveneys). One- two- and three-bedroom flats and town houses are being built and, if central government concurs, a complex of 800 residential units will result. Four-bedroom, three-storey town houses are currently available from £217,000. One-

bedroom flats will follow shortly. New Barratt and other nearly-new properties also adorn an area that mostly comprises three-bedroom Victorian and Edwardian houses. Barratt's town houses (three bedrooms/bathrooms/stores) start at £290,000. Little and Large: "If you get a garden larger than 25 feet you are doing very well," says Folklords Tray. However, John D Wood estate agents are selling a five-bedroom, four-reception Victorian

villa with a 149-foot garden and an £850,000 price tag on Brodrick Road. These roads near Wandsworth Common have wider thoroughfares and larger gardens. Transport: Northern Line (zone 3) serves the City and West End. Thameslink (Tooting) serves Blackfriars and Kings Cross, and connects to the Bakerloo Line at Elephant & Castle. Mary bus lines. Council Tax: The council is Wandsworth, and Band D is £370. Local Amenities: Shops include

Kostatino's hand-made shoes, the Sugar Art Centre (cake-making), and George King Metals. Bespoke flip-flops? The parks offer tennis, bowling and the Tooting Bec Lido, London's largest outdoor swimming pool. Estate Agents and Developers: Barratt South London, 0181-647 9699; Fairview, 0181-682 0561; John D Wood, 0181-871 3033; Kinleigh Folard & Hayward, 0181-767 1400; Peterman, 0181-673 8881; Rolfe East, 0181-682 2255.

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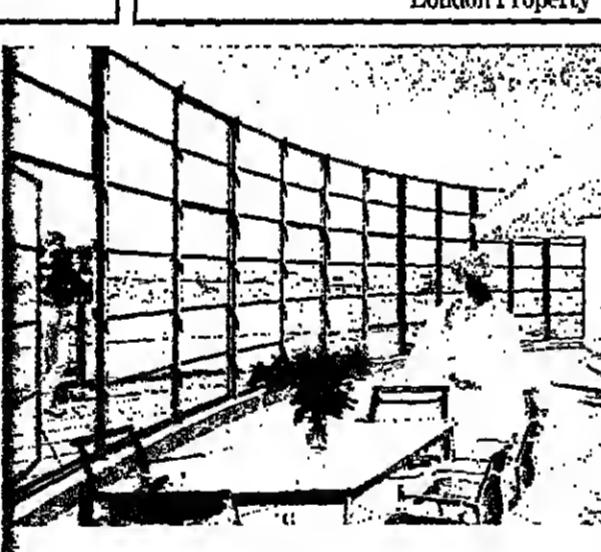
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David Thomson on  
Billy Wilder's masterpiece

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Is this Linda McCartney's  
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Sarah Raven tells you how to  
grow your own exotic salads

## PLUS

Annalisa Barbieri: how I quit  
the gym and got a life

Jan Morris's diary  
from Venice

## The Rock

Continued from page 1  
before its most recent metamorphosis. Arthur Groom went the hard way - cross-country by camel and, when he finally reached the rock, he recorded his sentiments, as all travellers did: "I felt like an ant at the door of a cathedral," he wrote. That struck a note of religious humility which was to be repeated countless times, whether in the formal speeches of politicians ("It is part of the spiritual heart of Australia," said the Governor-General when he banded the rock back to its native owners in 1985) or in the piety of tourists who choose not to climb on what they accept as Aboriginal sacred ground, and who can carry off a souvenir T-shirt

"I didn't climb Ayers Rock" to mark their sacrifice to the gods of uneasy white conscience.

There's no particular grounds to doubt Groom's sincerity, but it's hard not to wonder whether there might also have been a thin fibre of disappointment, stuck there in the teeth of his achievement. Did it fully meet those huge expectations? Or did he wonder what to do with his pent-up anticipation once he was there?

These days, of course, the visitor has already been countless times already, by means of that vast profusion of virtually identical photographs - so many now that they would probably form a pile as large as the rock itself. And where the pioneers strained to catch their first glimpse of this fabled spot, tourists may find themselves straining not to see it too soon, from an angle or a distance that won't match the mental template. Because the rock does

have a wrong angle, or rather an invisible one. Like a famous screen actress with photo approval, it is almost always photographed from the same side, where the light falls most flatteringly and its features are most nearly symmetrical.

And this is one key to its cultural triumph over its closest rival, the nearby formation called Kata Tjuta or the Olgas - an astonishing congregation of vast monolithic boulders, which rise out of the desert like a child's drawing of mountains, plumply curved and featureless.

"Mount Olgas is the more wonderful and grotesque," wrote Ernest Giles, the second white man to reach the spot. "Mount Ayers the more ancient and sublime." He was right - Uluru's simplicity of line and its setting on a clear horizon give it an architectural quality, a sense of enigmatic, consciously shaped presence which the Olgas will never have. Uluru looks like an

altar stone for some forgotten celebration, an answer to the human need for a hand-hold in the midst of vacancy. As an anchoring point it is unsurpassable, whether it is a cartographer's triangulated net of measurements you want to fix, or a mythology of creation, or a seven-night Red Centre coach trip.

Sublimity can be a problematic product for the modern tourist, though. I overheard a bored flock of American travellers gathered round the pool at the Sails in the Desert Hotel, a discordant echo of the pink galahs which range themselves along the canopies to drink from this chlorinated oasis. "We've done the sunset, the sunrise and the camel ride," said a New York matron. "All I want to know now is how to get out of this place."

It was a whine of claustrophobia in a place that is an agoraphobic's nightmare - but it wasn't entirely preposterous.

The Ayers Rock Resort (brand recognition takes precedence over cultural deference when it comes to commerce) exists only because of the rock - and yet the rock is impervious to the average tourist's demand for novelty. What it does best is doing nothing at all - for all the faintly strained ballyhoo about colour changes and sunrise viewings.

Launching a new marketing push in Australia last month, the resort management acknowledged the problem - "Hot, dry and dusty, with nothing to do but climb the rock and go home" is the general perception of Ayers Rock Resort, conceded the first line of their pitch. They have some cause to be anxious because visits to the Northern Territory have been declining in recent years. Uluru itself may buck the trend - at the last count over half a million people visit every year - but if it doesn't it won't be for want of effort on the part of

the resort management, who have now identified a "mind, body and spirit" strategy to appeal to new customers. Climb the rock, learn about its associated myths and then commune with its immemorial mysteries, champagne glass in one hand to kick-start your enerated powers of primitive awe. It is a strategy in which the demands of modern tourism and ancient reverence begin to approach each other, assisted by the supermarket-trolley belief systems of New Age questers.

Uluru provides one answer to the conundrum of how you "do" the void - that vast, indifferent mass proving equally responsive to almost any urge visited against it, from Aboriginal dreaming to the modern songlines of international tourism. If you can't get to Australia though, try Berlin, because however modest its version of monolithic pleasures, they are essentially the same.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity

expected to die off within about 10 years.

Stormont's red squirrels have survived with the help of special red-only feeders that provide enough extra food to stop them succumbing to the competition from the greys. These were provided by the Ulster Wildlife Trust and Northern Ireland's Environment and Heritage Service. The groundsmen of Stormont Castle alerted the Wildlife Trust to the problem in the first place and now maintain the feeders. By working together, these three groups have saved the red squirrels.

The red squirrel is threatened with extinction in the UK and it can only be saved if government, conservationists, landowners and the public can work together. What has happened in Stormont gives us hope because it shows us that co-operation is not an impossible task. Co-operation at Stormont - that sounds like the start of another allegory.

HELEN BAKER

The Wildlife Trusts

London SW1

## Business surveys

Sir: Nick Herbert of Business for Sterling accuses the CBI, not for the first time, of having ruled out a "completely random survey of business" last year (Right of Reply, 9 April). This is quite untrue.

The decision we reached last summer was twofold. First, to encourage *The Financial Times* to conduct a completely random survey of business and to accept their results as a good measure of opinion when they came out. And second, to focus the CBI Survey, as before, on CBI members, thus allowing comparison with previous surveys.

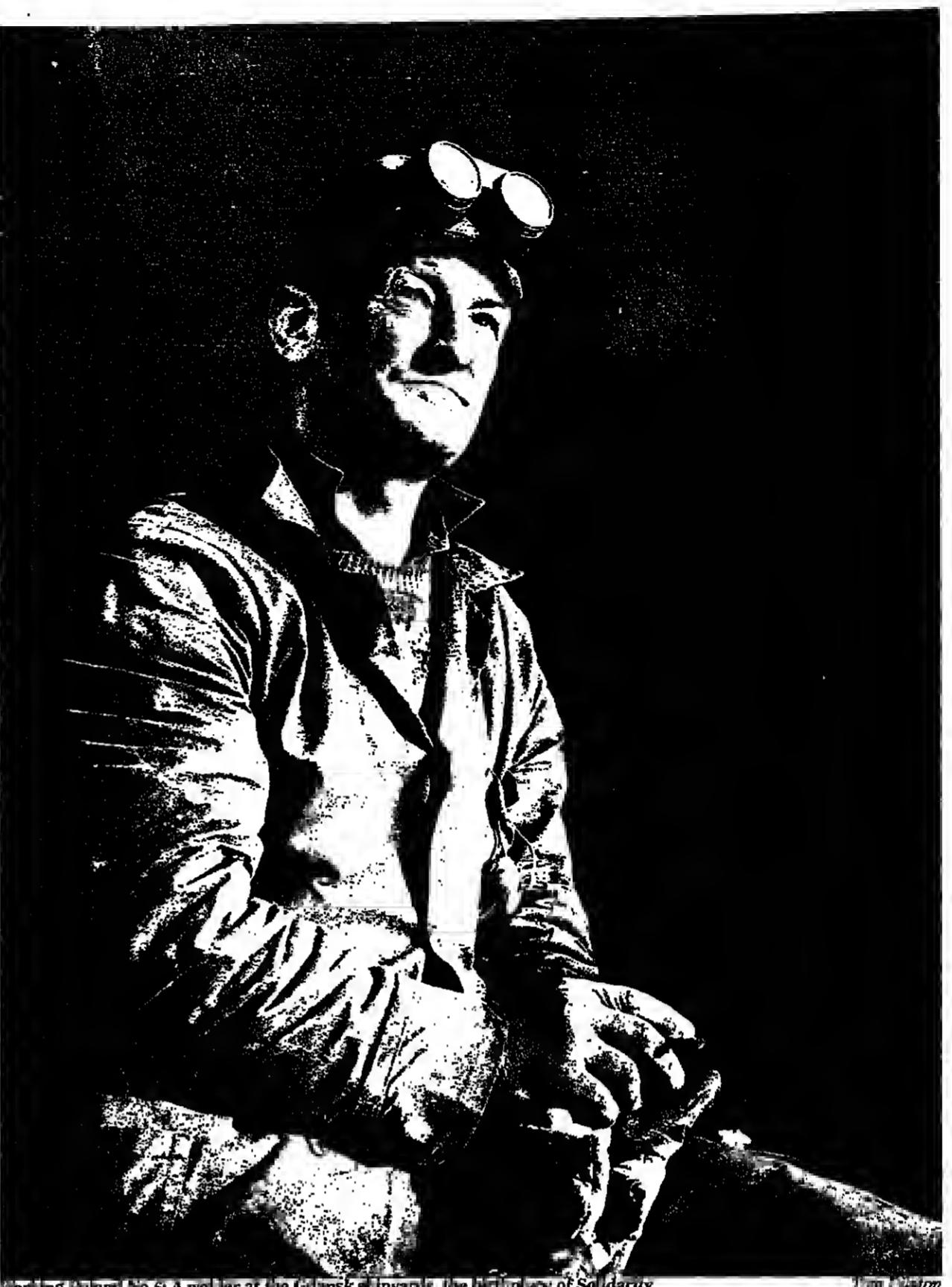
This would be made quite clear from the minutes which Mr Herbert quotes, if he would only cease quoting one sentence out of context of the sentence immediately following.

ADAIR TURNER

CBI Director-General

London WC1

## IN BRIEF



Working Visual No 6: A welder at the Grimsby shipyards, the birthplace of Solidarity

## Trial by TV

Sir: Jeff Anderson, the editor of *Tonight*, offers us a self-contradictory statement in trying to justify the televised interviews of the suspects in the Stephen Lawrence case ("Lawrence object to TV interview", 8 April). It is important to scrutinise Mr Anderson's flawed reasoning now that the programme has been broadcast and has, in the view of many, been seen to have failed to advance the cause of justice in any way.

Mr Anderson said: "The programme includes

significant new material

which may open new avenues

of inquiry for the police.

However, we are confident it will not prejudice any possible future prosecution of the five

suspects. The programme,

however, was heavily edited

and openly hostile to the

interviewees. If "significant

new material" was introduced

(and that is arguable), the fact

that it was delivered to us as

part of a hostile, indignant,

journalistic case is obviously

predisposed to any new trial

based on the new material.

The bombing aided and

abetted President Milosevic

in the immediate and brutal

displacement of hundreds of

thousands of his people, who

but for the Nato action would

still be in their own homes,

albeit under dire threat, but

still with hope. There are

always alternatives to trite

force, but Nato chose aerial

bombardment, so sadly

reminiscent of the worst

excesses of the many wars

that distinguish our past.

Bomber Harris earned his

unlovely sobriquet for

supporting the destruction of

Dresden to curtail the Second

World War in Europe, a policy of

arguable efficacy. Are we

now to have Bomber Blair

leading us into a Third World

War to the resounding strains

of "Forward Christian

Soldiers" perhaps?

STEPHEN GOLDBY

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

## Care over drugs

Sir: The American experience may show that advertisements aimed directly at consumers are a highly effective way of stimulating demand, but there is little evidence to support claims that the overall health of the nation has also improved ("Drug firms demand right 'Drug advertising'", 8 April). Indeed, 64 per cent of doctors in an American survey said they would like to see the practice decrease or be abolished.

With regard to the

argument that advertising increases awareness and detection of disease, one has to ask if this could not be better achieved through independent public health campaigns.

Before we go any further

down the road toward direct-to-consumer advertising, we need to ask ourselves whether medicines are like

commodities. When

advertising persuades us that

we want or need more

consumer products, we can

usually weigh up the value we

place on them relative to our

priorities, with price as the

moderator. Not only do

European consumers not pay

for the real cost of medicines

a civilised and equitable

component of the NHS, but

they are not in a position to

make an informed choice

about what to consume.

A full and proper public

debate is essential before we

slide into a situation where the drugs industry has direct and unmanaged links with consumers.

NICK STACE  
Consumers' Association  
London NW1

## Divided Cyprus

Sir: Mr Paul Hamlyn (letter, 4 April) has the facts on Cyprus back to front. The problem did not begin in 1974 - it was ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Cypriots by Greek Cypriots 1963-74 which created the present state of affairs.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home wrote in his memoirs, "I was convinced that if Makarios could not bring himself to treat the Turkish Cypriots as human beings, he was inviting the invasion and partition of the island."

The American Under-Secretary of State, George Ball, said, "Makarios's central interest was to block off Turkish intervention so that he and his Greek Cypriots could go on happily

massacring Turkish Cypriots.

Obviously we would never permit that." The fact is, however, that neither the US, the UN, nor anyone, other than Turkey, ever took effective action to prevent it.

As for the Greek Cypriot missing persons, the evidence of the Greek Orthodox priests who buried them is that almost all of them were killed in the mayhem which Greek

Cypriots unleashed upon each other before the Turkish army had even landed.

It is time the world recognised that we the Turkish Cypriots are entitled to live in peace in our own state, and stopped treating the Greek Cypriots, despite the atrocities they committed, as if they were the lawful government of the whole island.

HAKKI MÜFTÜZADE  
London Representative,  
Turkish Republic of Northern  
Cyprus

London WC1

## Squirrel entente

Sir: Your "man in the

undergrowth" is right to point

out that the red and grey

squirrels sharing a bane at

Stormont Castle are not likely

to be found sharing a peanut

or building a nest together.

Pandora, 9 April. Their behaviour may not provide a blueprint for peace in

Northern Ireland but, luckily

for the threatened red

squirrel, the whole story

amounts to much more than a

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## The soccer business has returned to a level playing field

**IT SEEMED** to be expecting too much of this Government to stand up to Rupert Murdoch, the "billionaire tyrant" as he described himself on *The Simpsons*, part of his own Fox TV empire. Even this newspaper fell prey to cynicism when, in the Budget last month, the Chancellor announced that decisions on competition policy would in future be contracted out to an independent commission. It seemed that this was a device - a welcome one, but a device none the less - to take sensitive decisions on takeovers out of the hands of politicians. Just as an independent Bank of England absolves Gordon Brown of responsibility for unpopular interest-rate decisions, so an independent Competition Commission will in future excuse Stephen Byers from having to upset New Labour's business friends.

In the meantime, as the uncharitable thought ran, Mr Byers would let the Murdoch bid for Manchester United through in return for a series of worthless promises not to use a bridgehead in the Premier League to gain an unfair advantage for BSkyB.

We are delighted and relieved to admit that we were wrong. The Labour Government's posture of defensive cringe towards Mr Murdoch's cheap press interests has, at a stroke, been replaced by the confident stance of squaring up to a hulky. This is no mere side-issue of the Government's self-respect: the policy of cringe was not even in Labour's own interest, and it was certainly not in the country's interest.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission verdict that the BSkyB takeover would have been against the public interest was right. It was not a straightforward judgement - the idea of fair competition in the crazy economics of sport is a peculiar one. Even in America, land of the free market and home of the brave capitalist, the multi-billion industries of baseball, football and basketball are run by cartels enjoying special exemptions from competition law.

At one level, sport is simply a branch of the entertainment industry, and should be treated in the same way as the movies, television and ten-pin bowling. In this country, if you do not think you are getting a good show for your money from BSkyB, or from going to see a live football match, then you can go to see *Shakespeare in Love* or go bowling instead.

But soccer is not - yet - a show put on by a single company for consumers to choose freely in the marketplace. It is a sport which grew organically from thousands of local teams, sustained by the loyalties of millions of supporters. Even Man Utd began as Newton Heath, a local railway works' team. For one company to cream off the value made possible by these local loyalties would be oppressive. But it would also be counter-productive from the point of view of economics. If soccer is to thrive as a business, it must thrive as a sport, which requires it to nourish its roots and to pay attention to the non-commercial loyalties of the fans. That is why the flogging of Ryan Giggs shirts for a small fortune is a short-sighted business practice.

Nor are individual clubs genuinely competitive corporations operating in a free market. Their product is the game; a game requires two teams; and repeat purchases require a series of games which is where we organised, and a winner declared according to the rules



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of sport rather than the rules of the market.

Man Utd, as the Coca-Cola of soccer, being the worldwide brand leader, is already close to achieving such a dominance of the Premiership that it could result in the entire competition being rendered both boring and pointless. That would not be good for business.

Even as a business, however, soccer is much more complex than that because the value of the game lies in its television rights, which means that the loyalties that are generated in one - apparently competitive - market can be used as leverage in order to prop up a dominant position in another market. That was Mr Murdoch's strategy: to use sport as a lever to maintain his dominance in pay-TV, which in turn cross-reinforces his dominant position in newspapers (which is where we declare an interest).

He wanted to buy Man Utd as an insurance policy. His non-monopoly of televised football is threatened from two different directions. First, the Office of Fair Trading is still investigating the Premiership cartel, if it concludes that it operates against the public interest, BSkyB's deal to broadcast Premiership games is off. Secondly, digital technology gives other broadcasters the means to charge people for watching television, which means they can match the huge amounts BSkyB can offer for the television rights to Premier League games.

The decision by the MMC and Mr Byers means that when the rights come up for renegotiation, Mr Murdoch will be competing on something resembling a level playing field. That is good for English football. Just as important, it is good for a diverse, competitive and plural media in this country.

## The familiar diatribe of war zones, from Rwanda to Belfast



**FERGAL KEANE**  
*The Macedonian taxi driver pointed at some Albanians: 'They have 10, 15 children so that they can outnumber us'*

and that Nato's attacks on Slobodan Milošević are simply pushing them one step closer to a Hitler ethnic battle.

And so when you ask yourself how on earth the Macedonian government could have treated the Albanian refugees with such obvious contempt - confining them at the border, forcing them on to buses and planes to get them out of the country - consider the fear and the barely suppressed anger of the majority population here. They have thus far escaped being dragged into the Yugoslav wars of succession. It has taken political guile of which few Western politicians would be capable to deal with what corresponds like to call a "fragile ethnic balance". In other words, any increase in the resident Albanian population at present some 15 per cent of the national total - and you are sliding towards disaster.

It is not hard to understand why the Macedonians would want rid of the refugees as quickly as possible. But the forced expulsions have left a deep reservoir of bitterness. The Kosovar Albanians feel that they have been treated like animals. As Mimoza Butagi, a 21-year-old law student from Pristina, told me: "They beat us and forced us on to buses. They wouldn't tell us where we were going. I feel as if I am lost in space. I have run out of words for the way I feel. Yes, animals, that is how they made us feel."

By the time we reached the Aleksander Palace hotel, the driver had worked himself into a frenzy of disgust for these Albanians who wanted to drive him out of his own country. It was a familiar diatribe. I had heard it in one form or another in Belfast, Rwanda, South Africa and a few other hotbeds of ethnic conflict. The fear that somebody will take what we have, that somebody will want to change us into something we are not, the fear that they will swamp us and that we will cease to be ourselves. It is the psychology of the threatened and it eats away at fine notions of tolerance and inclusivity. I don't suggest that all Macedonians feel this way about the Albanians, but most of those I've spoken to feel that they are under threat

I met her, crammed into a room with 20 other people, in a decrepit Albanian army base in the border town of Pogradec. They had just spent 11 hours on buses, winding over mountain roads as the Macedonians pushed them yet further away from Kosovo.

It was an extraordinary sight, central to that narrative of strangeness

spoke about earlier. Here they were: lawyers, doctors, factory workers, farmers, even a music teacher... a whole community uprooted and pushed from one country to another country to another country.

The refugees could not care less about a Greater Albania. They simply want to go home. I asked Mimoza if she blamed Nato for her plight. Hadn't the air strikes sparked the ethnic cleansing which drove her and thousands of others from their homes? She did not agree. "When the air strikes came we ran to the cellar and cheered. You know, we celebrated. And every time we hear on the news that there is an air strike, we cheer again even though we are driven away from our homes. Who was it who drove us from our homes? It was not Nato, not Nato. It was the Serbs who did it."

We have heard a lot about unclear war aims and bad planning in the past few weeks. I don't know enough about military affairs to talk authoritatively on the question of planning and intelligence. But as for war aims, I am willing to speculate. It may have started out as a war to impose a peace agreement on Milošević. But it has become something quite different now. It has become a battle for Mimoza and the hundreds of thousands of others who have been driven from their homes at gunpoint and made dependent on the uncertain mercy of strangers; and it is a battle too for the memory of those who were cleansed from Voznik and Srebrenica and a hundred other towns in the long calvary of the former Yugoslavia. It is about saying "never again" and meaning it.

I met her, crammed into a room with 20 other people, in a decrepit Albanian army base in the border town of Pogradec. They had just spent 11 hours on buses, winding over mountain roads as the Macedonians pushed them yet further away from Kosovo.

It was an extraordinary sight, central to that narrative of strangeness

## Prosecute the war, but hold back the bombing for tonight

"THE PRESIDENT believed military intervention was morally justified, but he fretted privately that he was being forced to act at the worst possible moment: 'I can't believe they got me into this. How did this happen? We should have waited until after the elections.'" Some will say that this account of Bill Clinton's decision to invade Haiti by George Stephanopoulos, his former press officer, does not serve the presidency well. Mr Stephanopoulos's candid memoir, *All Too Human*, exposes the White House war machine as a rickety, opinion-pol-driven, make-it-up-as-you-go along contraption.

The accounts of how President Clinton made decisions on Haiti, Bosnia and Iraq hardly inspire confidence that the right decisions are now being made for the right reasons on Kosovo.

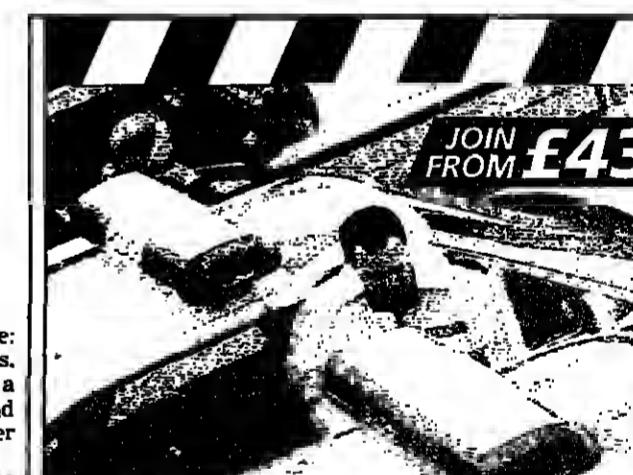
Except for one thing. What comes through clearly is the dramatic shift in American policy from that of defending "vital" national interests to one of altruism. Following the end of the Cold War, President Clinton's obsession with opinion-polling reinforced the shift. In none of his foreign adventures, even in the débâcle of Somalia, have US trade or defence interests been directly threatened. In the case of Haiti at least, Mr Stephanopoulos says White House polling showed that the American people were "more willing to use our power to protect innocent civilians from torture and terror" than to protect national self-interest.

This should stand as a rebuke to those who accuse Tony Blair of blindly following the US, or who portray Nato as an instrument of US imperialism. The bottom line in the Balkans is that Nato's intervention is morally justified. For all the criticism of Mr Clinton and Mr Blair for their dependence on focus groups, a just war should be able to command public support, and can be fought with greater force if it does so.

The ends of returning the people of Kosovo to their homes and of ending Slobodan Milošević's criminal campaign of ethnic terror are just. But the means by which they are pursued must also be just, and it is right that, in broad terms, they should be constrained by public opinion. Nato's leaders are wise to restrict the military strikes on Serbia so tightly in order to minimise civilian casualties, even if it means a longer war.

They would also be advised to halt the bombing for tonight, the night of the Orthodox Easter vigil, not so much to avoid the mentality of persecution among the Serbs (it is too late for that), but to assure public opinion back home that the war is being prosecuted with a tender conscience.

However, public opinion in western Europe is running ahead of the politicians in its preparedness to commit ground troops. It is possible that our leaders have not yet caught up with the changes in popular attitudes to wars fought for "humanitarian" ends described by Mr Stephanopoulos. But in this case, in the case of crimes against humanity committed in the European Union's waiting room, it is not up to President Clinton to give a lead. If ground troops are going to have to be deployed - and it is hard to see how they cannot be - the countries of the EU will have to shoulder the moral burden. Step forward Mr Blair, armed with opinion polls.



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Fergal Keane is a BBC special correspondent

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## LOCKERBIE BOMBING

Opinion on the extradition of two Libyans to the Netherlands for trial under Scottish law

## THE SCOTSMAN

DARK AND DIRTY American and British secrets as well as Libyan ones may be revealed during this trial. Many questions will arise over the next two years – the time likely to elapse before a verdict is given. There will be much obfuscation and duplicity. Scots should steel themselves for an imperfect outcome to the trial. The suspects may well finally go free and we will still only know part of the truth.

DAILY NEWS  
Canada

IF THE Libyans are found innocent, or the case is thrown out, things get better for Gaddafi. Based on what is known about the case, this is quite possible, for it seems to depend on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence. There is, moreover, another plausible suspect: Iran, which in late 1988 was burning with resentment over the allegedly accidental shooting down of an Iranian civil airliner over the Gulf by the US warship Vincennes. Ayatollah Khomeini had vowed vengeance, and an airliner for an airliner might have seemed an appropriate revenge to the young militants around him.

## THE AUSTRALIAN

SANCTIONS AGAINST Libya could have been eased long ago if the accused had surrendered. Indeed, sanctions would never have been imposed if the Libyan government had not supported acts of terrorism against other states, a history that extends back before the Lockerbie bombing. The costs of pursuing the criminals are too high to be quantified but they have had to be paid. If this trial demonstrates that acts of terrorism will be punished the effort will have been worthwhile.

NEUE ZUERCHER  
ZEITUNG  
Switzerland

WHAT EXACTLY persuaded Tripoli to give way is not clear. The readiness of the British and Americans

to have the proceedings against the two alleged terrorists not in Scotland itself but in a Scottish court in the Netherlands was not enough to account for the change of heart. There may be another, unwritten concession behind the handover: a promise from the British and Americans not to stretch the trial in The Netherlands into a general reckoning of the Libyan secret service and the Gaddafi regime. The clients of the Libyans will remain hidden. Such a renunciation would be detrimental to the court's finding of the truth. No one could talk of anything more than a merely symbolic conclusion to the Lockerbie affair.

## TIMES OF INDIA

NOW THAT the two suspects are in Scottish custody on Dutch soil, there is a possibility that the world will get to see whether there is, after all, a genuine case against them. Given the persistent allegations about the Lockerbie bomb having been planted as a result of a sting operation by US intelligence agencies, Washington desperately needs the Libyans to be convicted. Such a verdict would also open the door for international pressure to be exerted on the Gaddafi government, which would suit Washington. The Scottish judges will be under great pressure; let us hope they are allowed to perform their duty in an objective and professional manner.

THE HERALD  
Scotland

THE TRIAL is unlikely to be sensational but will feature a wealth of technical detail and evidence which tax the understanding of the three judges who will hear the case without a jury. If it will be a difficult time for the judges, the presentation of the case by prosecutors will also be far from easy. As Professor Robert Black has reminded us, many of the most important witness statements were gathered a decade ago and there is no guarantee that these witnesses will be traceable today. Yet the trial will go ahead, and for anyone with a belief in the primacy of justice, that will suffice for now.

## The price of ethnic cleansing

LE MONDE  
France

ON THE thirteenth day of Nato's bombardment campaign there was one result that no one contested: the proven pathetic incapacity of these raids to stop the "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovo ordered by the president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic. If our objective really is about bringing back the refugees – at least a certain number of them – to Kosovo, it will involve one form or another of ground intervention. Even a negotiated return would impose a ground protection against Kosovars. Maybe it is time to tell the truth: the defence of the refugees' right to return is an empty statement if one continues to categorically exclude the sending of ground troops.

DAILY STAR  
The Lebanon

THE THOUSANDS upon thousands of refugees, trudging their way through mud and snow to safety in Albania and Macedonia, are the ones who will continue to pay a price in human misery and suffering. Nato's air strikes, as much as Mr Milosevic's regular and militia forces, will in the end achieve the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. There will be very few Albanians left to cleanse.

FRANKFURTER  
RUNDSCHAU  
Germany

NATO DIDN'T imagine its 50th birthday this way. The alliance that for decades earnestly maintained peace finds itself not only in a war with Serbia, it's threatened with losing. The primary war goal of Nato – to stop the murder and expulsion in Kosovo – has not been achieved. In a few days Milosevic's troops and gangs will have completed their ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. Hundreds of thousands of Albanians are fleeing, and the gigantic task to aid them has become the central point of the war far more so than the air attacks. A success for celebrator Nato can now only be measured on how quickly and in what dimension they succeed in giving back the Kosovars their homeland.



## REFUGEES FROM KOSOVO

*World comment on the exodus of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, resulting from Slobodan Milosevic's programme of ethnic cleansing*

JERUSALEM POST  
Israel

THE ENORMITY of the catastrophe currently taking place in Kosovo is now sinking in, and linking up with the collective memory of the Jewish people. One word rings with particularly stark familiarity: deportations. This is a cause with which

Israel should proudly identify, both morally and strategically. Israel should be noting the military ties that have reportedly arisen between Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein, and be encouraging any Western attempt to stand up to threats from aggressive dictators. As it turns out, the emotional humanitarian response on the part of many Israelis

may reflect a sounder analysis than the supposedly strategic thinking of the Israeli government.

NEW YORK TIMES  
US

IN MACEDONIA, relations between the country's Albanian minority and its largely pro-Serb majority were always tense, and the government fears an influx of ethnic Albanians will lead to unrest. Nato must be sensitive to this danger. Stability in Macedonia keeps the war from spreading. But Macedonia's concerns are no excuse for its harsh treatment of the refugees and its attempt to limit their number. Nato should be carrying out its pledge to move 100,000 of them to temporary homes in Western Europe. The United States will house 20,000 at the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba. Only a few European countries have so far volunteered to take refugees. That must change, and quickly.

## SYRIA TIMES

WHAT IS particularly miserable is the plight of the Kosovo people who were driven out of their country by force and intimidation. Even worse are the suggestions to transfer a lot of them to other countries either in Europe or further afield. The scene of Kosovars fleeing their country in large numbers brings back the memories of those Palestinians who were forced out of their country, in the late Forties and early Fifties, by the Israeli army and Zionist gangs. History is repeating itself.

## IRAN NEWS

AFTER THE disintegration of the Soviet Union, the West, led by the United States of America, adopted the doctrine of "New World Order" and tried to impose a unipolar system on the rest of the world by monopolising every aspect of international relations. The continuation of the Balkan war will benefit no one but the unholy alliance of Washington and Nato. Therefore, the bloodletting must be stopped immediately through diplomatic channels before it is really too late to save the lives of almost a million innocent Muslim Kosovars.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE LAWRENCE SUSPECTS

*Views on Martin Bashir's interview of the five alleged murderers of Stephen Lawrence, for Granada's 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald'*

## THE DAILY MAIL

THE REAL victims in all this, of course, are Neville and Doreen Lawrence. They have endured the murder of a much loved son. They have been betrayed by the incompetence of the police and the failure of the judicial system. Now they have suffered the anguish of watching the suspects in the case try to justify themselves on prime-time TV. Valid journalism? What we witnessed last night seemed more like a callous effort to improve the ratings. This was not a good night for British television.

## THE GUARDIAN

EVERY SUSPECT irritably protested his innocence and Bashir was methodically impatient. What viewers saw depended upon who you spoke to. Either it was a sensational scoop, the one every journalist had been chasing, answering the nation's questions and prov-



## THE EXPRESS

THAT CURRENT affairs are safe in Trevor MacDonald's hands. Or it was a tasteless stunt for a sensationalist series – an insult to the memory of Stephen Lawrence, and a jig on the grave of quality current affairs. (Decco Aitkenhead)

## THE MIRROR

THEY WERE given a platform and the opportunity to speak the honest truth. But James and Neil Acourt did no such thing. Only when pressed by Bashir on the question of

## CHINA AND THE US

*Reactions to the Chinese President Zhu Rongji's visit to America*

BOSTON HERALD  
US

IT IS in our interest to have China in the World Trade Organisation, but not at any price. To work to get China into the WTO helps China conclude that the US is desperate for their friendship – the damage such a conclusion can do is far greater than any trade benefits.

SING TAO  
China

BEIJING HAS given in to many US demands so it can join the WTO. However, some people have tried to challenge Clinton on these conditions. But China should be entitled to more benefits. Mr Clinton's enemies have failed to topple him over a series of sex and financial scandals, so they now target his policies on China. Mr Zhu may not break through in the US political arena, but he may be able to dismiss some of the objections to WTO membership.

TIN TIN DAILY  
China

MANY IN Washington say that China's WTO dilemma cannot be solved during Mr Zhu's visit. The cooling of US pressure has given Mr Zhu time to gain the upper hand. If it fails, it will have been because of roadblocks put up by the US and not through any fault of the Chinese, who has agreed to so many concessions already.

DAILY NEWS  
US

OFFICIALS SHOULD confront Mr Zhu about the reasons our relationship with China sometimes sour. Congress should look closely at the alleged illegal campaign contributions from China, and the charges of nuclear spying. But however frustrated we may become with their regime, China should not be punished by depriving it of the very things that will lead it toward more freedom.

## SCOTTISH ELECTIONS

*Reflections on the campaign for the Scottish Parliament, which officially began this week*

## DAILY TELEGRAPH

THE DANGER for Mr Salmond is that the other parties will take votes off him in the centre. Blair, according to one opinion poll, is Scotland's most popular politician – a fact which has surprised those observers not fully acquainted with the Scottish political scene. To him falls the task of maintaining his Government's overall popularity. Least Scottish voters use the forthcoming poll as a chance to voice their disapproval of it, as if this were a giant by-election. He must also articulate the benefits of keeping Scotland within the UK. In that task the other Unionist parties must be enthusiastic partners.

## THE MIRROR

WHAT CONCLUSIONS should be drawn before casting votes? Judging by the events of yesterday the parties have nothing new to say. They could abandon expensive public relations exercises and rely instead on the common sense of Scots to use their vote as they choose. Yet that wouldn't be politics.

## MISCELLANEOUS

*Stories from around the world*

MAIL &  
GUARDIAN  
South Africa

ISAAC MOFOKENG, who shot Johannesburg Zoo's Max the gorilla while fleeing police, was sentenced to 40 years in jail. He was convicted on 10 counts including rape, robbery and malicious damage to property (the gorilla). The magistrate called Mofoekeng "a loose canon, a danger to society and a walking time bomb – if you are left outside, the next crime you will commit is murder".

MIDDLE EAST  
TIMES  
Egypt

ALTHOUGH OFTEN portrayed

as exotic in Orientalists' writings and paintings, sandstorms, called khamees, are a gritty fact of life that Egyptians and other North Africans face every spring. This year the weathermen expect us to have anywhere from six to seven khamees. Severity of the storms cannot be predicted in a long-range forecast. The largest of khamees develop over the Atlas mountains of Morocco. An area of low pressure moves off the mountain range and slides on to the hot sandy Sahara. It moves quickly, gathering energy from the heat and pulling moist, cool air from Europe and the Mediterranean as it gathers strength. By the time it reaches Egypt, it has accumulated dust, seeds and insects from the west.

QUOTES OF  
THE WEEK

"If you're a doctor you sleep with nurses, and if you are a photographer you sleep with models." David Bailey, celebrity photographer (above)

"Now it is the power of the nipple!" Sophia Loren, Italian actress

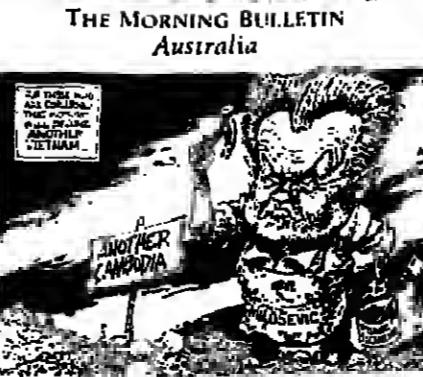
"I hope the Serbs are not playing poker with people's lives." Jamie Shea, Nato spokesman

"I prefer art that's at least 200 years old, when artists really knew how to paint." Hugh Grant, actor

"There's a fine line between being Governor of Texas and making a fool of yourself." George W Bush, Governor of Texas

"I am scarcely a walking advert for a health farm." Ann Widdecombe, Conservative spokeswoman for health

"I just loved the idea of being grown up, mainly because I was a rather repellent teenager." Joanne Lumley, actor



JERUSALEM POST  
Israel

BALTIMORE SUN  
US

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

# Does charity begin at the Great Wall of China?

*sh elections*  
**Sing**  
under analysis than the  
the thinking of the Israeli  
COK TIMES  
relations between the  
minority and its large  
towns and cities of which  
had to under Nazi rule  
this danger. Stability is  
the world's spreading  
concern, and no excuse  
to the refugees and  
migrants number. Now  
our pledge to move  
to temporary homes in  
the United States will  
be guaranteed. A naval base  
few European countries  
are offering to take refugees  
and migrants.

"DEAR SUE Arnold, I am hoping to raise money for a worthy cause - the Stoke Poges Living Arts Trust - by pushing a barrel-organ (with live monkey) from Basingstoke to Budapest this summer. It promises to be an exciting project which will put SPLAT well and truly on the cultural map. So far we have been promised support by a number of local organisations, including The Stoke Poges Ladies Only Society of Herbalists, Stoke Poges Army Museum and Stoke Poges United Distilleries, who have very generously agreed to provide SPLAT, SPAM and SPUD - hack-up vehicles containing food, bedding and first aid respectively. I am nevertheless hoping to extend my appeal to a wider audience, which is why I have taken the liberty of writing to you..."

This seems to be the latest fashion in charity sponsorship.



**SUE ARNOLD**  
*I've nothing against  
sponsoring, but forking  
out for someone's  
holiday is not the same*

At least that one wasn't asking for money, only publicity. Most of the begging letters I get, and I've had a spate of them over the past two weeks, include half a dozen sponsor sheets and the unsolicited information that some individuals have given them up to £250.

To do what? A variety of intrepid things such as walking along the Great Wall of China to raise money for the British Heart Foundation, running across the Sahara for the Royal National Institute for the Blind Talking Books Appeal, and scaling the heights of Machu Picchu in Peru for something undoubtedly worthy, but totally forgettable, as far as I am concerned because it included Mariella Frostrup as one of its celebrity tour leaders.

Smooth sand, it is rocks and humps and hollows. Stumbling, rather than running, he said. When he's finished, it will be an achievement not a package holiday or a celebrity gig. Rather you than me, I said when I sent him his cheque.

The most ingenious sponsor-

seeker I know of was the student

who planned to drive from London

to Sydney to raise money for

charity and wrote to all the Hilton

Hotels between said capitals

asking for free accommodation.

Which precise charity he was

supporting or how much he raised

we never found out. He was last

heard of at the Delhi Hilton, no

doubt rubbing shoulders with

impoverished maharajas at fund-

raising cricket matches. It was

probably better in the old days,

when charity began at home.

Geri Halliwell doing good deeds in the Third World. Thus, instead of cycling from Clapton Common to Dorking along with 2,000 other anonymous well-meaning folk, as I once did to raise money for the London Lighthouse Appeal, you get a bunch of celebrities cycling along with you, followed, and this is the crucial part, by TV cameras and newspaper reporters who will convert an otherwise non-newsworthy story into a page-one splash.

Break a couple of minor royals into the mixture and your celebrity cake will double in size. I know a well-heeled Austrian with connections who does nothing but organise glittering international charity events where, for between £5,000 and £10,000, you can rub shoulders with impoverished

maharajas at fund-raising cricket matches in Jaipur or shoot bear in Siberia with claimants to the Romanov throne. (Did you know that the descendants of all the deposed monarchs of Europe have their own society? They have regular dinners in a backroom of the Pizza Express (they're all broke) and plan what they are going to do when they are back on their thrones.)

Don't misunderstand me. I've nothing against sponsored charities. If I weren't for their annual sponsored cycle ride from London to Brighton, heaven knows how the British Heart Foundation would pay for its equipment. On the other hand, from a sponsor's point of view, forking out for someone to fly to Beijing on what is basically a packaged holiday with optional excursions isn't quite the same

thing, especially as I happen to know the individual who wrote to me isn't short of a bob and could probably afford to buy the BHF a cardiograph all by herself. She's an inveterate traveller, usually goes with a group of like-minded mature Open University fine art students. Her last trip was the Constance Spry flower-arranging tour of the Hindu Kush.

OK, OK, she's raising money for charity with this promenade along the Great Wall, but I can't help feeling that the BHF would get more out of the pair of us if she emptied her piggy-bank. I sent a modest donation and we left China out of it. Running across the Sahara - now that's different. The man who wrote to me happens to be blind and said it would probably take him some time because the Sahara isn't

smooth sand, it is rocks and humps and hollows. Stumbling, rather than running, he said. When he's finished, it will be an achievement not a package holiday or a celebrity gig. Rather you than me, I said when I sent him his cheque.

The most ingenious sponsor-

seeker I know of was the student

who planned to drive from London

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## THE SATURDAY PROFILE

JENNY PITMAN, RACEHORSE TRAINER

# Feisty queen of the National

THERE IS always a story in The Grand National. Even a random sample over the last five decades shows how the race consistently delivers an emotionally charged drama. Take the collapse of the Queen Mother's horse, Devon Loch, in sight of the winning post (1956); or the shock winner after a pile-up of horses (the 100-1 Falmouth in 1967); the making of equine history (Red Rum's third win in 1977); the triumph of the human spirit (cancer victim Bob Champion's win on Aldaniti in 1981); the bumbling of officials (the false start fiasco of 1993); or even the intrusion of the real world, with the IRA bomb threat that forced an emergency evacuation of the course and postponement of the race in 1997. The Grand National is simply incapable of delivering an uneventful storyline.

Of the potential narratives in today's race at Aintree, there is one that dominates all others - a last victory for the race's most famous trainer, Jenny Pitman, as she edges towards the shadows of retirement at the end of May. It is not just Pitman's record in the race - she has already won it twice, with Corbiere in 1983 and Royal Athlete in 1995 - that makes her final attempt so noteworthy, but also her prominence in the nation's perception of the event. She has had at least one runner every year since 1981, and her on-screen chemistry with the BBC's Aintree anchorwoman, Des Lyman, has been more potent than any soap-opera pairing.

For amidst the rough swirl of the day - the Grand National is the most-watched and most gambled-on horse race of the year - Lyman provides an orderly calm, while Pitman not only senses the nation's emotional pulse, but can also deliver an accurate diagnosis. In the chaos of 1993's void race, and the fear and confusion of 1997's bomb warning, the 18 million television viewers at home and the millions more in betting shops found Pitman articulating their own frustrations and anger in the common currencies of plain language and flowing tears. Whether she likes it or not, Mrs Pitman has become the great race's Muse, and today will be granted life membership of the Grand National Club for her services to the race.

Such achievements and distinction must have seemed an impossible horizon to the young Jennifer Harvey as she grew up in the post-war years with six siblings on a small, run-down farm in the village of Hoby in Leicestershire. For while her account of this happy early life generates images of HE Bates's book *The Darling Buds of May*, with the farm filled by animals and Jenny riding ponies at the age of two, there was little aspiration to her life. She was expected simply to embrace farm or livery work and, in time, motherhood.

At the age of 15, Jenny joined a racing yard as a stable-lass, feeding and grooming horses and mucking out their boxes. Within four years, she had met and married the rising young jockey Richard Pitman and soon gave birth to two sons, Mark

and Paul. While Richard rode to some prominence on good horses such as Pendil and Lanzarote, Jenny was left to bring up the children.

The former amateur jockey Brough Scott, now a journalist and presenter, recalls the days when he "picked Richard up from their little house in Lambourn to go to the races, with Jenny left behind as a beleaguered, frustrated mother, and young Mark crawling around the kitchen floor". Scott says that he would have "offered odds of 1,000-1 at that time against Jenny Pitman becoming a media darling".

Ironically, it was the acrimonious break-up of her marriage to Richard after 10 years

### LIFE STORY

**Origins:** Born 11 June 1946 as Jennifer Susan Harvey, one of seven children of a farming family in Hoby, Leicestershire.

**Education:** Left local school at 15 to become a stable-lass.

**Vital statistics:** Married jockey, later commentator, Richard Pitman, in 1965. Separated, 1975. Two children, Mark and Paul. Married David Stait, assistant trainer, 1997.

**Career:** Became a national hunt trainer in 1975, at Weathercock House Stables, Lambourn.

**Grand National successes:** Corbiere (1983), Royal Athlete (1995). This year, her last, running Naithen Lad (pictured).

**Other notable winners:** Cheltenham Gold Cup: Borough Hill Lad (1984); Garrison Savannah (1991). Welsh National: Corbiere (1983); Borough Hill Lad (1983); Steeरsby (1986). Scottish National: Willsford (1995). Irish National: Mudhalin (1997).

**She says:** "Horses are more generous than humans, they give everything."



that eventually propelled Jenny into the long march to where she is today. Jump jockeys, perhaps because of the ever-present dangers in their sport, are mostly cavaliers when it comes to women or drink, and a high proportion of their marriages fail. So when Richard left Jenny and the children, she found salvation for the resulting trauma and depression in turning to what she knew best, the care of horses, and also - as a direct act of defiance - the professional training of them. By 1976, she had obtained a training licence, facing down what she thought was the "rudeness of racing".

And then came the 1993 Grand National which, even for those who had taken against Pitman, proved to be an occasion for sympathy rather than sorness. A disastrously botched start and the failure of a crude warning system saw many of the

perered about my prospects across a long, polished table".

Through personal loans and an overdraft, Pitman acquired Weathercock House Stables in Lambourn, and began investing in the sort of horse-flesh for which she has become most renowned: big, burly, staying steeplechasers. Her major breakthrough arrived in 1983, when Corbiere - a horse with "a big arse like a carthorse" that she had found in a field - won the Grand National. The following year, another strapping chaser, Burrough Hill Lad, won the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Garrison Savannah, now ridden by her son Mark, repeated this feat in 1991, and was only just overtaken on the run-in of that year's Grand National, a dramatic repeat of the fate that also befell Richard Pitman in 1973.

By now, Jenny was a highly successful, self-driven trainer, but she had also developed a huckeing style with those in the racing press whom she thought patronising or inaccurate. She'd threatened to castrate one writer for comments about Burrough Hill Lad and, as relationships deteriorated, the combative style continued with another kick being handed an inscribed toilet roll "for all the crap you've written about me". Jockeys and racing authorities suffered similarhursts of "Pitman's Backhand", literally so in the case of jockey Jamie Osborne.

Having been deemed to have "carved up" a Pitman runner in a hurdle race at Ayr, Osborne found himself being slapped in the face by an irate "Mrs P", the nickname by which she was now known. However, events in the 1993 Gold Cup gave many of her enemies a chance to retaliate. The Martin Pipe-trained Irish horse Carville's Hill was a strong favourite for the race, but there was a view that his front-running style and bold jumping could be disrupted if another horse was run up on front. As soon as the race began, Pitman's 150-1 outsider Golden Freeze went alongside Carville's Hill and matched him stride-for-stride, jump-for-jump until Carville's Hill's jumping disintegrated.

The aftermath of the race proved to be deeply poisonous, with Pitman accused of having run Golden Freeze as a "spoiler", while she insisted he had run on his merits. There was a media frenzy and eventually the Jockey Club held an enquiry. Though they exonerated Mrs Pitman of foul tactics, the relatively small racing community still traded bitter opinions, and Mrs Pitman even threatened to sue the BBC commentator Julian Wilson for his remarks. What was seen as her intimidatory behaviour provoked one press report that she was "the Wimie Mandela of Racing".

And then came the 1993 Grand National which, even for those who had taken against Pitman, proved to be an occasion for sympathy rather than sorness. A disastrously botched start and the failure of a crude warning system, saw many of the

Grand National field complete the two circuits of the race without realising that the race had already been rendered void. First past the post was Esha Ness, trained by Jenny Pitman, and her team of frustration won the hearts of the nation in the face of what looked like upper-class bungling on a "Light Brigade" scale.

Two years later, Pitman's redemption was more than completed by the victory of the 12-year-old Royal Athlete, a fragile horse that she had somehow managed to coax back to fitness and full-confidence in a memorable feat of training. No wonder Pitman was dubbed by the tabloids "The Queen of Aintree". She has, as a matter of record, also won the Irish, Welsh and Scottish Grand Nationals with her horses, a feat that marks her down as one of the greatest racehorse trainers ever.

Two obvious post-war themes seem self-evident in Jenny Pitman's rise to such prominence - the empowerment of women, and the breaking down of class barriers. She had, on her own admission, not much of an education, and those who know her say that she is suspicious of people who come across as "smart alecs". Similarly entrenched male attitudes are

often given short shrift. One trainer who knows her well says that "she's not one for homilies that disarmed those who felt she had upstaged the event. "I am not rich in terms of money, but in terms of all the memories I've had from racing, I have feelings that the richest person in the world couldn't buy." Win or lose today, there will be an inevitable torrent of tears on Des Lyman's shoulder as the "Queen of Aintree" makes her formal abdication. She has already assigned her stables to her son Mark, a highly promising trainer in his own right, but perhaps the public at Aintree will not let her go so easily.

For here is a race that is not, unlike The Gold Cup or The Derby, an elite urethra of horses fighting for superiority. The Grand National is a handicap, in which all the runners, no matter what their breeding or training, have a theoretical chance of success. The public understands and accepts the inherent democracy of such an enterprise, rejoicing in the populist sentiment and lasting fame it generates. In Jenny Pitman's life and career achievements, they undoubtedly see the same struggle entwined in human terms.

STAN HEY

## ACCIDENTAL HEROES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

### 35: CHRISTINE KEELER, CALL GIRL

having an affair with her - "Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?" - has passed into daily usage. Blonde and brunette, Keeler and Rice-Davies became inseparably linked, although Keeler, at the time and since, has publicly dissociated herself with the "call girl" Rice-Davies.

So what happened to elevate

Keeler to the status of heroine? After all, life wasn't very generous to her after Profumo. A nine-month stretch

in Holloway for perjury and two divorces led to a poverty-stricken life in a public housing project by the time Joanne Whalley-Kilner portrayed her in the 1989 film *Scandal*.

But the thing is, the film was principally about Keeler - not Rice-Davies, who was played in a lesser role by Bridget Fonda. Something had happened between 1963 and 1989 and that thing was a photograph. The famous shot of a naked

Christine Keeler astride a black plastic Arne Jacobsen chair - the chair's back keeping her decent - is often misattributed to David Bailey or Terence Donovan. It was in fact taken by the Hong Kong-born snapper Ewiss Morley in an upstairs room at Peter Cook's Establishment Club in Soho during the summer of 1963.

The photograph was meant as a publicity still for a projected film about the Profumo affair. "She only agreed to strip after we cleared the room of all attendants and turned down the lights," remembers Morley. "I even offered to turn my back." Keeler always claims she kept her pants on.

Morley remembers a wide-eyed

naive young woman - the exact opposite of everything that the photograph conveys. This became an instant icon of the emergent Swinging Sixties - defiance and liberation in one posture. Postpies as Pop Art. Fallen women were no longer brushed out of sight - they were a fashion statement.

The photograph's potency has endured - shorthand for modern, sexually independent women - and has been reconstructed in advertising campaigns as diverse as the Citroën Saxo and granary bread. Kylie copied it, Joe Orton satirised it, and the pose is a veritable cliché in men's style mags. Last year in Glasgow, the Spice Girls even recreated the pose on stage - giving Christine the ultimate accolade. The progenitor of Girl Power.



## THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



A squirrel-quarrel on the bough –  
They tumble off together now.  
Victor and vanquished, down they go  
Deep in a drift of hawthorn snow.

A district quakes. A kraken wakes  
Of late, which takes to English lakes.  
It's three feet long and goes for pikes.

The Midlands "alligator" strikes  
This week at Sandwell Valley Park.  
While rangers languished in the dark

"A salamander of some sort"  
La wild life experts thought,  
But since it's not the Black Lagoon  
They hope to catch the creature soon,

As people at their water sport  
Run certain risks until it's caught.

Long holidays? The teachers fight  
Of course, and absolutely right.  
They need that six weeks as a budge  
To stop them sliding off the edge.  
The latest scheme's result-gearred pay  
And now some prat pops up to say  
"Let's cut their summer holiday"

A code for this roundelay.  
Meanwhile Witchfinder Woodhead stalls;  
A whole profession hopes he falls.  
I use his word: the news may be  
Quite "educative"? Possibly.

*The Sun*, I swear this is the truth,  
Reprinted "Anthem for Doomed Youth".  
And Wilfred Owen, pictured there  
Beside the poem – his haunted stare.  
They ran it huge – forget what page,  
Your poet had fainted by that stage.

The time when we may tour the stars  
Reported to be coming soon.  
We'll book a weightless wedding day  
Then honeyeath upon the moon.

It's slightly pricey as it goes,  
At round about five hundred K;

Though men who spend that kind of loot  
Might not be in a rush to stray.

A Space-Groom for an Astronette  
By 2025, they think.

I wouldn't rush to place a bet  
Before you check that rail-link.  
The future's hardly ever late,  
But trains? They're hard to estimate.

Birthday this week: Kofi Annan.  
Who's sixty-one. Tough gig, top man.  
Great product, peace. So hard to sell...  
Kofi Annan, I wish you well.

## DAYS LIKE THESE

10 APRIL 1980

PHILIP TOYNBEE,  
writer, observes in his journal:

"I can remember only two occasions when my parents expressed open irritation with each other in front of me. Easy to say that the conventions of their class and period restrained them; easy to say that this suppression of their true feelings probably contributed to the final and deeply embittered bust-up. But how I respect them both for that surface dignity they maintained! What a gross fault it has been to suppose that restraint must be equated with suppression; that there is something honest, even admirable, about an immediate public exhibition of angry feelings."

13 APRIL 1930

ISAAK DINESEN  
(Karen Blixen), novelist, writes to her mother from Somalia:

"At long last Fathima had a little girl on Sunday: I was almost about to believe it was a false rumour. She is so delighted with the baby and is well. I think she is especially pleased that it is a girl. In the conditions of the Muhammadan world, where men and women are so far away from each other in work, interests and life in general, and really only come near each other when, as Goldschmidt says, they are either to dance or be united in wedlock – and anyway I'm not at all sure that Somali men and women do dance much together – I think that the women gradually grow unable really to feel anything for the male sex – not even for their sons."

The men's world is too incomprehensible to them: I do not think they have any respect for it at all, except in so far as it provides food; but the real, actual and reasonable world is that of women, and with a little girl they feel they have something that is close to them and belongs to them, while a boy will sooner or later be drawn into the strange and irrelevant existence of men."

15 APRIL 1778

PARSON WOODFORDE  
incumbent of Western Longville, notes in his diary:

"We breakfasted, dined, supped and slept again at home. Brewed a vessel of strong Beer today. My two large Pigs, by drinking some Beer grounds taken out of one of the Barrels today, got so amazingly drunk by it, that they were not able to stand and appeared like dead things almost, and so remained all night from dinner time today. I never saw Pigs so drunk in my life."

IAN IRVINE

## WITNESS

## WELSH ELECTION CAMPAIGN

# The only black candidate in Wales

THERE'S a feeling that Monmouth, a county of rolling hills, workaday farms and tidy market towns, is on a see-saw. Part of Wales, yes. But so close to the border that some pupils at local schools live in England, while people in Chepstow and Monmouth town commute to work in Gloucester and Bristol.

Like any no man's land, Monmouth has long been fought over – bloodily in days gone by and more recently by warring political parties. One of the crucial battles in next month's election to the National Assembly for Wales is being played there with added bite.

Cherry Short, the Labour standard bearer, is the only black or Asian candidate competing for one of the 40 first-past-the-post seats in the 60-member body; the only black candidate, indeed with a chance in any of the elections in either Wales or Scotland. Two others in Wales, an Iraqi-born academic and a former black student leader, who came through the vetting procedure, are on the party lists for the other 20 "top up" seats, too low down to have a chance of winning.

A tall, handsome woman, Cherry Short is at ease pounding the pavements to press Labour's case. It's a long way from Jamaica, where she was born 46 years ago. But the Caribbean town of Manchester that she swapped for Wales in 1963 is not too unlike Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow, she says. Agriculture – sheep rather than sugar cane – is the link.

Ms Short has Welsh connections. "My father comes from Anglesey Quaker stock. He met my mother when he was living in the USA. I came to Wales at an early age and lived with friends and went to school here. I am decidedly not a one-issue politician."

In other words she is pure New Labour. The mother of sons aged 23 and 10 ("I have experienced the personal difficulties of combining a working life with that of being a mother"), she holds an MSc in women's studies and a BSc in social administration. A member of the Government's task force for the "Welfare to Work" and "New Deal" programmes in Wales, she sits on industrial tribunals and has been chair of the standing conference on race in Europe (Wales) for the past five years. She is married to Christo-

pher Short, the former chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Wales.

Monmouth is the birthplace of Henry V. A statue of the victor of Agincourt overlooks a square named after the victor of the 1415 battle in which Welsh longbow men demonstrated the awesome power of a weapon capable of delivering the 15th century equivalent of a cruise missile.

It has swung hither and thither since a parliamentary by-election in 1991 when Huw Edwards snatched the seat from the Tories. It reverted to blue in 1992. On 1 May 1997, Edwards was back with a majority of 4,178. That cushion is not sufficiently plump for Labour to feel complacent.

Howard Hancock's third genera-

tion master butcher is blunt: "We didn't want an assembly. But now we have got one I expect I'll vote on 6 May. Who for? I'm still making up my mind." His shop promotes British, not Welsh, meat.

Monmouth's ethnic population is minute. Irma Gingal-Rock, born in Dominica 50 years ago, came to Wales in 1970. She runs a delicatessen with her partner Tom Innes and is enthusiastic: "It's wonderful to find a black woman candidate here."

Happiness is not uppermost in Bill Williams's mind. A party member for more than half a century, he is upset.

"A lot of things about the Government worry me. Especially the war in Yugoslavia. But I'll still vote Labour next month," he says.

When she lived in Finchley, Wendy Vijendran voted for Margaret Thatcher. Now her home is Penrhosse, a hamlet buried in the countryside, and she has undergone a change of heart.

"I must be the only person in my tiny community who voted for Glenys Kinnock in the European Elections and I'm going to vote Labour next month," she says.

In the spring sunshine, Monmouth wears a jaunty air. A statue of one of its famous sons, Charles Rolls, the co-founder of Rolls-Royce, looks down on the passing scene. Antique shops and a cavernous second-hand books emporium jostle with cafés, run-of-the-mill retailers and an upmarket jeweller.

Charity shops appear vaguely up-

market. Estate agents, digesting the latest interest rate cut, have few properties on offer for less than £60,000 and a number at more than £250,000.

Country juxtaposes with town in the columns of the weekly *Monmouthshire Beacon* (established October 1837).

Cesspit emptiers advertise for custom,

and the front page carries a story trai-

ning a meeting to discuss the low rate

of salmon spawning on the Wye which

is said to threaten the species' survival.

The sheer size of the constituency adds intrigue. The southern boundary touches the M4, with London less than two hours' drive away.

Thirty-odd miles north, a network of minor roads criss-cross between Wales and England. Only dyed-in-the-wool local drivers know whether they are in Herefordshire or the county of Monmouth. Three ancient fortifications – White Castle, Skirrid and Castle and Grosmonst Castle – dating from the 12th century dominate the terrain. The Normans knew a thing or two about defence in depth. They built the strong points in a strategic triangle so that any one under threat

could be supported by the others.

The assembly battle is a straight bout, not a triangular or quadrilateral contest. The head-to-head is between Ms Short and the Tory, David Davies, who works for the family tea importing business and campaigned hard for a no vote in the referendum.

Nationalism is almost dead in Monmouth. Plaid Cymru was bottom of the poll two years ago, and in the 1991 by-election the party collected fewer votes than Screaming Lord Sutch. With only 1 in 50 speaking Welsh is not surprising, but nationalists are quick to point out that in the north-west of Wales, where the ancient tongue is the first language of two-thirds of the people, Plaid is making waves.

Like her Westminster namesake, Clare, Ms Short speaks plainly: "Wales has to recognise its diversity."

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not surprising, but nationalists are

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casual observer is just another bucolic

beaver, something stirs. With Cherry

Short on the campaign trail and a close

fight in prospect, Monmouth is

heading to become more than an

everyday story of country folk.

TONY HEATH



Andrew James

## THE WEASEL

In which Rick Stein causes me and Mrs W to have a domestic in the fishmonger's and I resort to thumbing through specialist magazines



groaned. I was forced to concede that I was feeling not unqueasy myself.

Twenty-four hours later, the whelks were still making their presence felt. Mr Stein may have come to venerate the blighters, but, as far as I'm concerned, these hardy British gastropods have crossed the cusp into inedibility. Maybe we should only eat tiddlers, like the *bulots* you get in France. However, I learn from this week's *Fishing News* that "a new minimum size for whelks

is being introduced to the fishing industry."

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## THE SATURDAY ESSAY

# The bewildering pleasure of looking at paintings



SIRI HUSTVEDT

I have never loved a painting I can master completely. My love requires a sense that something has escaped me

When I was 19, I saw Giorgione's *The Tempest* for the first time, not the painting itself but a slide projection of it on a wall in an art history course. I had never heard of the artist and knew little about Italian Renaissance painting, but for some reason the picture caused a physical response in me – a genuine tremor of amazement. I fell in love with it then and there, in those 40 seconds before the professor clicked to the next slide. But why? What happened to me? I am not alone in feeling an almost electrical connection to a painting. I know many number of people who travel great distances to see a picture they have longed to see, who stand before a flat rectangular canvas covered with paint and have what they deem "an important experience".

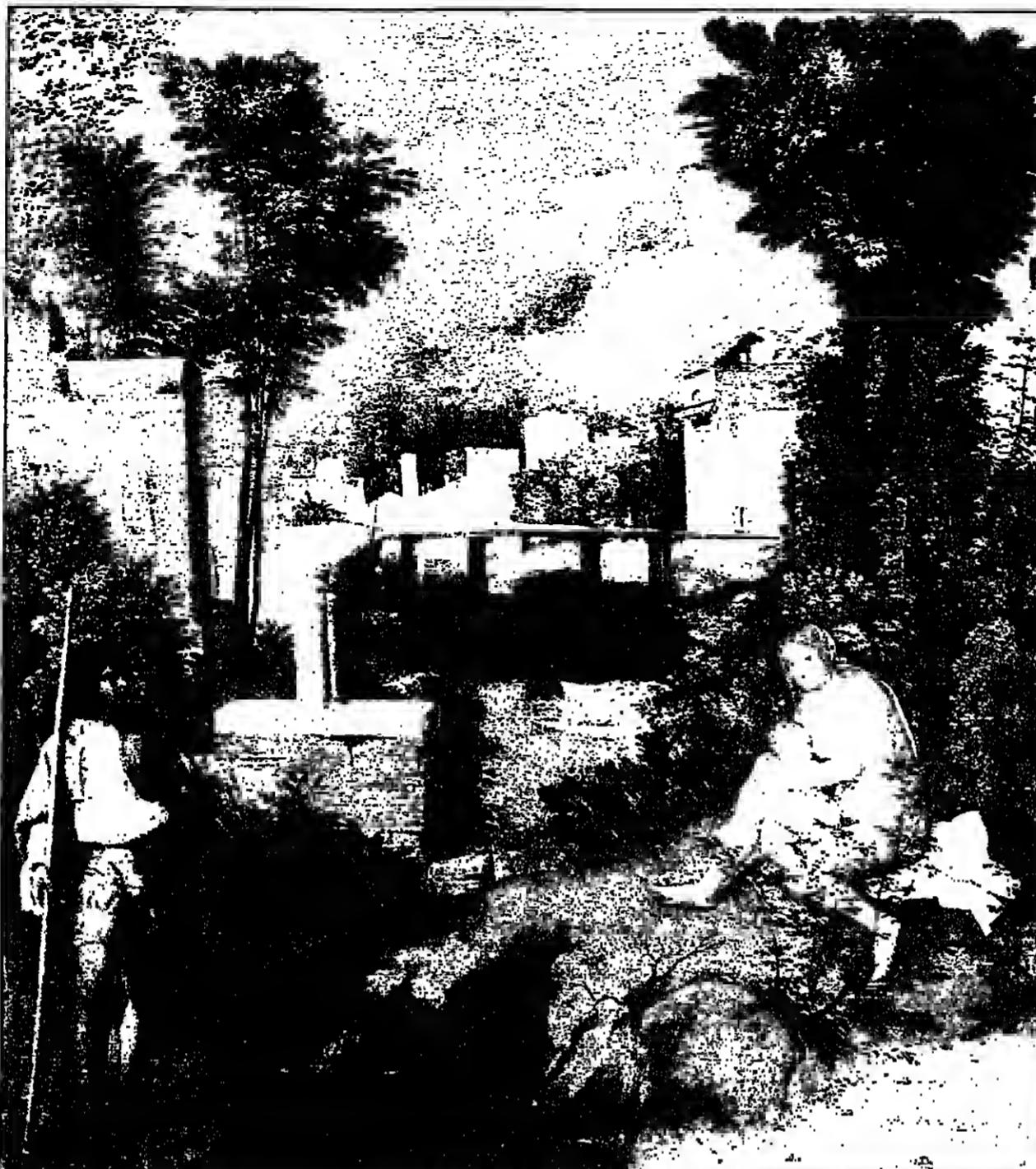
*The Tempest* is a small picture of three people in a landscape, painted in 1503 or 1504. A man with a staff stands in the foreground, looking towards a woman who is seated on a hillock nursing an infant. A stream runs between them. She is naked except for a white cloth, which is draped over her shoulders and is spread out underneath her where she sits on the ground. Some curious ruins and a deserted city lie behind the figures. Above them is a bluish-green sky with a frail stroke of lightning and a clouded moon. Nobody knows what the painting is about.

Marcantonio Michiel, a Venetian nobleman and antiquary, kept a notebook between 1525 and 1543 in which he refers to the picture as Giorgione's rendering of a soldier and a gypsy. In the 18th century, the painting was called *The Family of Giorgione*, out of a mistaken idea that depicted the artist, his wife and child. (The latter two never existed.) Salvatore Settis, an Italian art historian whose book on *The Tempest* was first published in 1978 and appeared in English translation in 1990, argues that the painting is a veiled account of the Eden myth; that these two people are Adam and Eve and that there's a snake in the picture. No one has ever seen this snake, Settis.

A more convincing argument, detailed by Jayne Anderson in her monograph of *Giorgione* (1997), is that the canvas is a pictorial version of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphilo*, a romance about Poliphilo, who in his search for antiquity comes across Venus feeding Cupid, but that's only a guess. There are also scholars who believe the painting is about nothing, that it's an example of a free-form fantasy.

Between my first viewing of the slide and a visit to the Accademia in Venice, where I saw the real painting for the first time four years later, I made a startling discovery. The image I carried in my mind was very accurate, with one exception: I left out the man. My memory of the painting was of the woman, the child, the landscape, the ruins, the city, the sky, the lightning – but no man. I gave this extraordinary gift to the heroine of my first novel, *The Blindfold*, who also remembers the canvas perfectly but has no memory of the fellow in the foreground. My obliteration of this man is a commentary on the painting, on me, and on the odd business of looking at paintings.

Every painting is still. It doesn't move. It is usually some kind of rectangle which mimics the architecture of a window. Its existence implies a spectator; just as a book implies a reader or a piece of music implies a listener. It is a dead thing animated by the presence of a living person who enters into some kind of relation with it. Not long ago, a woman wrote a letter to *The*



Giorgione's 'The Tempest': The female figure's eyes draw one into the canvas

Bridgeman Art Library

New York Times in which she cited her experience when she saw Michelangelo's *David* in Florence. She wrote: "What a thrill it was to stand there and soak in its beauty and power. But how long I had to wait in the gallery for things to quiet down so that I could concentrate on it."

Two things interest me about her statement. First, that she experiences the *David* as if it were active and she were passive – she "soaks" in the statue – and second, that she needs quiet for this saturation to take place. Her view of looking at the statue is a common one. The stone *David* radiates something in her direction and she prefers to have no distractions during those emanations. We rarely experience other inanimate things in this way. Think of a fork, for example, or a chair. Art is made to be seen. It is activated both by a cultural mythos that has decidedly religious undertones and by a real, even transforming, relation between the viewer and the thing viewed.

I have looked closely at *The Tempest* in the Accademia only three times. Each time is a repetition of my first rapture before that projected image in the classroom. I now know there is a man in the picture and that he serves as the vehicle of my entry into an image I did not fully understand, but understand enough to be fascinated. The staff he holds suggests that he is on a journey, that he has been walking. Now in repose, he looks over at the undressed woman calmly nursing her baby in a storm. He looks at her, but she is not looking back at him. She gazes outward toward the viewer, as though she has just lifted her eyes in the knowledge that somebody is spying on her.

By recognising me, the spectator, her eyes draw me into the space of the canvas, where I imaginatively become the man's double. In a painting, everything oc-

curs simultaneously, and I find myself trapped in this triangular seduction of looking – the direction of her gaze at me, coupled with the direction of his at her was what triggered my amnesia of him, the wandering male spectator. I forgot him because I was him.

The man and I occupy a similar space, because neither be nor I will ever get across the stream to speak to that woman or touch her. Nearly every analysis of the painting I have read acknowledges the insurmountable chasm between the figures. The stream separates them as it recedes backwards into the landscape. There is a bridge, however. Our hero wouldn't have to wade or swim through that stream. He could use the bridge, but he never will.

Why? Although the two figures are not very far apart, they appear to exist in separate realms. For one thing, he is dressed in contemporary clothing. Anderson suggests that this identifies him as a member of the Confraternity of the Sock, a group of young, unmarried noblemen who were engaged in amateur theatre productions. The woman, however, is nude, a signification of timelessness in that enchanted landscape, where a curious bit of wall is topped by two cylinders and where classical buildings coexist with houses that resemble those in rural areas outside Venice.

The woman's face is illuminated by a light from a mysterious source. Every one of her features is perfectly visible, while the young man's face is shadowed. The rest of him is easier to make out. He is obviously young and his jaunty pose and elegant clothing exude confidence. His body is fully inside the frame of the picture, but not by much. He seems to have just stepped from another world.

*The Tempest's* ambiguity has baffled its viewers for hundreds of years because it doesn't mean that the work defies recognition or that it's meaningless.

defies pre-existing codes for understanding paintings of the period. We are always reading art through known codes and precedents, even when those codes are unconscious. Nothing can take place between viewer and image without them. Most people have had the experience of seeing a work of art that is simply unintelligible to them. It doesn't mean that the work can't be comprehended. It means that the viewer's entry is blocked by a lack of orientation. The image can't come into view because it defies expectation, and expectation determines an enormous degree what we actually see.

I remember walking into a large hotel lobby of some architectural complexity and looking down a corridor at a person standing at its far end. I didn't recognise the person for a couple of seconds, and then, with a sudden shock, I realised that I was looking at a reflected image of myself. I needed to know that the wall was a mirror before I could see myself in it.

Very good and very bad paintings are often confused. A very good work may defy codes to a degree that renders it not only nonsensical but irritating, and because of this viewers pronounce it bad. Innumerable despised works have gone on to command prices in the art market that take one's breath away. And yet, although sophistication in a viewer may help orient him, it may also bar understanding. After all, those who have been most spectacularly wrong about works of art were usually people who wrote about art for a living. Rigid expectation is blind.

*The Tempest* is a painting that seems to wriggle out of the best-laid art-historical interpretations, but just because we can't name the characters in the painting or place them inside a known narrative doesn't mean that the work defies recognition or that it's meaningless.

If the painting is an allegory, it was probably, as Settis argues, an intentionally obscure one, a secret known to the painter, his young patron and perhaps a few other cognoscenti. *The Tempest* was owned privately, and it once had a painted cover which could be opened like a cabinet. Only then was the underlying image exposed. This method of looking at a painting is a seduction in itself. The spectator is allowed to open the door and peep inside, and what is met with when the image is revealed but more voyeurism, a game of glances in an imaginary place?

Bewildered, he is drawn into the mysterious otherness of the nude woman, who has caught his eye, who appears to see him, but her body is turned in the direction of that young stranger in the foreground, who is also looking at her. Furthermore, she is not alone. She has a child at her breast, a face which distances her further from the two spectators – one outside and one inside the painting. The lovely woman is not a reclining odalisque. Her erotic presence is defined by the fact that in this moment of nursing motherhood she is more unattainable than if she had no child beside her.

The drama of looking depicted in *The Tempest* is a reflective one. I, as spectator, am made conscious of my status as voyeur, which in turn binds me to the fellow in the foreground. His presence destabilises my position as someone securely outside the canvas, and the teetering effect it has on me creates an awareness of painting as the illusory projection of an artist. Whenever we look at a painting, we occupy the position once held by the painter who has now disappeared – that hidden body or ghostly presence behind every canvas. Even self-portraiture has this effect – the image which remains of a living face and body, now immobilised in paint.

Giorgione's picture coaxes us into a scene which announces itself as a dream or an inner vision. Just as when we examine the backgrounds in a Leonardo painting we know we are looking at an emotional landscape, we know that the countryside of *The Tempest* is not a representation of a real place. The weather is bad, but nobody seems to notice. If there is a wind, the trees are not much disturbed by it. We have stepped into the mirroring realm of the imaginary. If Anderson is right, and the young man with the shadowed face is wearing the colours of a group of young patrician players, what could be more appropriate to this painting than an allusion to theatre and to art, a world that enchants us through our eyes? In that case, the youth would become a human image of artifice, which by extrapolation would announce the presence of the painter himself.

Giorgione died when he was only 32 years old. Legend has it that he caught the plague from his mistress. He was always young. And it seems to me that the young man in the foreground doesn't look different from the self-portrait Giorgione did of himself as David. It's just a thought. The features of the wanderer are perhaps too blurry to be identified with any certainty. But even if, by some miracle, a scholar discovered a letter written by Giorgione, in which he explained all the references in this strange canvas, it would not solve the painting. One can't understand an image by placing a narrative beside it.

I do know that I have never loved a painting I can master completely. My love requires a sense that something has escaped me. This quality of cryptic excess may be responsible for the language people use to talk about seeing art as if an inanimate thing were endowed with an elusive, almost sacred power. In a culture flooded by facile images that race past us on a screen, peek out at us from magazines or loom over us in a city street – pictures so heavily coded, so easily read that they ask nothing of us but our money – looking long and hard at a painting may allow us entry into the enigma of seeing itself, because we must struggle to make sense of the image in front of us. *The Tempest* resides in room 10 in the Accademia in Venice. I think it will always resist my complete understanding, and that is why I will go back to look at it.

Siri Hustvedt's latest book is *Yonder: Essays*, published in the US by Henry Holt

## BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY



Remember?  
Tartan trews at half-mast?  
Feathery hairdos? "Bye-Bye Baby"? The original boy band is back.

The Bay City Rollers are getting together again and hope to cut a new album (as they used to say in those faraway days of Rollermania).

Considering the astonishing current enthusiasm for other 1970s groups like Abba, and yes, even Mud, it was always unfair that the Rollers became the band that never was, forgotten, an embarrassment, just airbrushed out of history.

Even the Wombles got a bigger slice of the retro-action. But the Rollers' tunes were just as melodic as Bjorn and Benny's and their lyrics well up to Mud's standards. "And we sang shang-a-lang and we ran with the band and sang do-wop-be-doo-be-do-ay." Sorry, got carried away there.

Anyhow, having spent 20 years not speaking to each other, Alan, Woody, Eric and Les are putting matters right. Les (McKeown, lead singer) explained that "we wasted a lot of time being angry with each other". How true, Les, how true. "You've got to give a little love, take a little love, be prepared to forsake a little love 'til the sun comes shining through."

Remember?

## Natural prawn killer

Despite its size (about a foot long), and a 200-million year history dating back to the Jurassic Age, the mantis prawn has only just been discovered at the bottom of Sydney harbour.



It is interesting to scientists because it can strike at its fish prey in five milliseconds and has the most complex vision of any invertebrate. "If it were the size of a shark it would be the most fearsome creature in the sea," as the biologists put it.

It is interesting to Australia's barbecue community because it tastes good. Eat with care.

## Monotreme sensation

Another exciting antipodean throwback. A duck-billed platypus has been born in captivity for the first time since

1944, and only the second time in history, at the Healesville Sanctuary in Melbourne. The event has been described as the zoological equivalent of reaching the peak of Mount Everest. The platypus (an egg-laying mammal or monotreme) is, like the mantis prawn, another of evolution's great survivors. But big prawn, tough as they may be, had better watch out. They are a favourite food of the platypus, which catches them using electro-receptors on its bill. Truly a primeval struggle.

## Image of the Week

"And what happens if I press this button?" Never let a control freak loose in a Tornado fighter.



Monday

We are staging the 51st British Academy Awards on Sunday and as it is only six days away, we are all working flat out. It's a bank holiday for most of the country but I go to the office. Working on a bank holiday is bliss, the phones don't ring and for the first time in weeks there is a sense of calm in the office. But the dry cleaners is shut!

I ring my mum to wish her a happy birthday. She is going to be my guest at the awards so we have a long conversation about frocks, when she is going to arrive and who will be sitting at our table. By 6pm I can see the colour of my desk and my in-tray is only half full. I get home by 8.30 (a rare treat, catch up on last week's newspapers and lose myself in *Nonchervous* on TV).

Tuesday

An interview I did last week appears in *The Express* and I get lots of calls from friends who realise how hard I have been working and why I haven't been in touch. Diane (my assistant) and I have the final production meeting with Peter Estall and his team at the BBC, who are televising the awards. I am able to confirm that Gwyneth Paltrow is definitely coming, with her parents, which is wonderful news.

I chair a production meeting for 50 people at the Business Design Centre in Islington, north London, our venue for the awards, to discuss all the arrangements. The build-up for the event has started and suddenly it all seems terribly real. I go back to the office to make the final arrangements for Elizabeth Taylor's

## MY WEEK

AMANDA BERRY,  
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OF BAFTA

arrival tomorrow. Elizabeth is receiving The Fellowship, which is the Academy's most prestigious award.

My daily diet seems to consist solely of Creme Eggs and biscuits and I still have not managed to pick up my dry cleaning.

Wednesday

Roberto Benigni has confirmed he will attend the ceremony which is terrific news. I spend the morning clearing paperwork and finalising table plans – that is, until they

change again. I rush out at lunchtime to have my legs waxed – the things a girl has to do.

I get a message to say that Elizabeth Taylor has arrived in London which means all our plans worked. My in-tray is overflowing but I take a few minutes to reply to e-mails from friends who want to know how everything is going. As my situation is desperate, I beg them to send me some chocolate. I don't manage to leave the office until 11.30pm, by which time I have missed Film 99

with Jonathan Ross which is doing a big feature on the awards.

## Thursday

I finally remember to pick up my dry cleaning. I attend an early meeting at the Dorchester to discuss the press conference for Elizabeth Taylor. I then go up to the Business Design Centre which is really starting to take shape now, the ceiling has been blacked out with star cloth, and the huge gauzes on which we are going to project archive film clips are now in place.

I spend the afternoon signing off press releases. It is terrible to be off to sign off a release announcing that stars like Michael Caine, Pierce Brosnan, Richard E Grant, Cate Blanchett, Jane Horrocks and Gwyneth Paltrow will all be attending.

ing. A huge Jiffy bag full of chocolate arrives from my friends.

## Friday

I receive a copy of the BBC script, which I can't wait to read. I grab a cab to go over to the Dorchester for the Elizabeth Taylor press conference – it is absolutely packed. Then I go to the Business Design Centre where they are doing a piece about final preparations for the evening news. The venue looks amazing.

I then go back to the Academy for a dinner hosted by Kodak in honour of the nominees in the cinematography and editing categories. After the dinner I go back to the office for a while and finally fall into bed in the early hours of Saturday morning.

INTERVIEW BY  
AOIFE O'RIORDAIN

# Lucille Lortel

LUCILLE LORTEL earned the name "Queen of Off-Broadway" by using her immense wealth to champion new writers and produce plays considered too off-beat or experimental for the mainstream theatres. She had an enviable gift for spotting innovative talent promoting the careers in America of Ionesco, Albee, Genet, Beckett, O'Casey, Whiting, Fugard, Shepard and Brecht.

"Off-Broadway has always seemed a more appropriate place for the kind of theatre I like," she once said. "New playwrights, neglected classics, adaptations of poetry, and things which are slightly off-beat." In the mid-Fifties, one of her off-beat productions considered a commercial risk, the Well-Breath musical *The Threepenny Opera*, was a massive hit, running for seven years.

An actress before she married a millionaire who insisted she stay home nights, Lortel channelled her theatrical enthusiasm into production, and her work was so distinguished that a gallery has been named after her in the Museum of the City of New York. The New York Library for the Performing Arts has a Lucille Lortel room, and in 1985 she became the first recipient of the Lee Strasberg Award for Lifetime Achievement.

The daughter of Harry Wadler, a manufacturer of women's clothes, and his wife Anna Mayo, she was born Lucille Wadler in New York City in 1900, though she preferred not to acknowledge her date of birth. "Age is a number," she said, "and mine is unlisted." She was tutored at home, and then attended the American Academy of Dramatic Art, after which she was sent in 1921 to study in Berlin with Max Reinhardt and the American drama teacher Arnold Kopf. She returned in 1924 to join a stock company in Albany, New York and made her Broadway debut the following year in *Two By Two*. Lortel had by now become Lucille Lortel in the belief that actresses should have alliterative names.

In a Theatre Guild production of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1925) starring Helen Hayes and Lionel Atwill, she was a hand-maiden. Several shows later she had a leading part in *The Man Who Laughed Last*, repeating her role in a 1930 film version. After appearing on Broadway as a French Maid in *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head* (1932) with Claude Rains and Jean Arthur, she retired from the stage, having married the previous year the fabulously rich chemical engineer Louis Schweitzer aboard the great ocean liner SS *Leviathan*, though until 1939 she acted in movie shorts filmed in Brooklyn during the afternoons (one critic called the doe-eyed, dark-haired beauty "a cinematic sexpot").

During the Second World War she bought a big white barn and moved it to the Schweitzers' 18-acre estate in Westport, Connecticut, ostensibly to provide a home for horses. Using a shortage of grain as an excuse, Lortel persuaded her husband to let her turn the barn into a theatre, and

in 1947 it opened as the White Barn with a series of play readings, attended by the cream of the theatre world.

Initially little more than a raised platform with deckchairs for the audience, the theatre was gradually transformed into an impressive auditorium (with generous help from Louis) and quickly established itself as much more than just a summer theatre. Eva Le Gallienne taught there (Peter Falk, the star of  *Columbo*, spoke his first words of Shakespeare in one of her classes) and plays which had their premiere there included Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*, Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses For Me*, William Saroyan's  *Jim Dandy*, Somerset Maugham's *Lovely and Fishes*, Tennessee Williams's *Three Players of a Summer Game* and John Whiting's *Saint's Day*.

Lortel recalled: "When the White Barn began, it was to summer theatre what Off-Broadway is to the commercial theatre. An avowed pioneer, it proved that summer productions could be stimulating, avant-garde and enthusiastically received." Since there was no local hotel, Lortel would let the cast and crews stay on the estate, something of which her husband did not entirely approve, so as a 24th wedding anniversary present he bought his wife a small theatre on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, the Theatre de Lys, one of the most amenable and charming of off-Broadway theatres.

Lortel's first production there, *The Threepenny Opera*, translated by Marc Blitzstein with a cast including Lotte Lenya and Beatrice Arthur, ran from 1955 to 1962. Though pleased the show was such a hit, Lortel was unhappy that its run restricted her ambition to mount several plays a year, so she began a series of matinee readings which were to run for 20 years. The first was a verse adaptation of Alan Paton's book *Cry the Beloved Country*, and many legendary performances followed, including Anna Sokolow's dance-drama *Melancholia*, *Shakespeare in Harlem* - a dramatisation of Langston Hughes's poetry - Richard Burton and Catherine Nesbitt reading Dylan Thomas, Siobhan McKenna as Hamlet (a

liberal, Lortel made a point of employing blacklisted actors, and plays she produced included Larry Kramer's *Destry of Me*, which dealt with AIDS, and Athol Fugard's apartheid-themed *Blood Knot*.

A frequent visitor to Europe, Lortel once stated that she was strongly influenced by George Devine's work at the Royal Court and tried to bring a similar spirit to Off-Broad-

**'Honey,' she told a journalist, 'I've got a one-track mind and it's theatre, theatre, theatre. I have no time for anything else'**

solo performance supported by off-stage voices), Helen Hayes in a Shakespeare anthology, Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson in a joint dramatic reading, plus rarely seen plays by Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Edward Albee, O'Casey and Ionesco.

After *The Threepenny Opera* closed, Lortel produced over 500 plays at the theatre which in 1981 was renamed the Lucille Lortel Theatre in her honour. A forthright

way. In Paris she met Jean Genet ("he was kind of strange" she said) and she brought him to the attention of American audiences with her production of *The Balcony* (1960). Other plays at the Lucille Lortel included David Mamet's *A Life in the Theatre*, Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*, Betty Garret's one-woman show, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* (brilliantly directed by Tom Tunney) and Robert Harling's *Steel Magnolias*, which was a big success.

works of the Bard, stating, "Shakespeare's not a new writer; he doesn't need my help."

Louis Schweitzer, who died in 1971, never stopped lavishing gifts on his wife, and in 1956 became the first foreigner in 400 years to be allowed to buy a gondola in Venice, and was given permission to name it Lucille. After his death, Lortel resided mainly in New York at her midtown apartment at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel, maintaining her

zest for the theatre and her sense of humour.

When a journalist reported last year that she would soon be 98 years old, she told a friend that she was furious, adding, "This will kill my love life!" She created the Lucille Lortel Fund for New Drama at Yale University to support the production of new plays, the Lucille Lortel Fellowship in Playwriting at Brown University in Rhode Island, made sizeable donations to dance and music groups and countless donations to scholarship and awards schemes.

"I know that I keep saying that I am going to retire," she said a few years ago. "People keep approaching me with projects. Before I know it, I've said 'yes' again. You could say I'm too busy to retire."

As Lortel once explained to a journalist, "Honey, I've got a one-track mind and it's theatre, theatre, theatre. I have no time for anything else."

TOM VALLANCE

Louise Wadler ("Lucille Lortel"), actress and theatre producer, born New York 16 December 1900; married 1931 Louis Schweitzer (died 1971); died New York 4 April 1999.

and difficulty, regained some equilibrium. Then he had a spell training pilots; then in 1941 he was sent to command Wellington bomber squadron in North Africa. Flying from Kabrit on the Suez Canal, the Wellingtons tried to support the Army by cutting off the Germans' sea-borne supplies, raiding Benghazi harbour night after night.

Rainsford graphically describes his feelings in those gloomy months before the Alamein dawn:

We had been quite a while in the desert, had done our best, but it didn't seem to be getting anywhere. It was a mood of course that passed, but there is a definite limit to anyone's courage and endurance and by January 1943 some of us felt we were getting a little bit near it.

He felt the pity of war more acutely than its glory. In North Africa, and later, he found it intensely difficult to come to terms with the loss of so many close friends.

Eventually he flew home and, with difficulty, regained some equilibrium. Then he had a spell training pilots to fly Wellingtons, in which role he had the help of one of the war's least likely but most charming adjutants, Bob Boothby. It was in this job that the "Accidental Airman" briefly lived up to his name. While teaching a senior officer how to fly a Wellington, Rainsford set out to demonstrate a copybook landing but, ignoring warning signals in the cockpit and even radio messages from the ground, did so without the benefit of his undercarriage, which he had completely forgotten to lower.

This setback did not prevent him

from learning to fly Lancaster bombers and taking command of 115 Squadron in 1943. There he flew missions over the Ruhr and other European targets and constantly wrestled with the problem of

"whether to put my name down for an attack on Berlin, or to try to persuade myself that the Commanding Officer was quite indispensable and that I was too valuable to lose". The award of the DFC in October 1943 made clear what his superiors thought about his solution to this problem.

He fell ill at the end of 1943 and the rest of his war was quiet. He ran a station on his own, Gamston in Nottinghamshire, and when the war ended he briefly became a civil servant, before returning to the RAF as Deputy Director of Air Support and Transport Operations at the Air Ministry in King Charles Street. One of Astro's roles was to supply, in the event of an emergency, the British garrison in Berlin.

By mid-June 1948 co-operation between the Allies and the Soviets had broken down, and by the 24th the city was blockaded. The only access for the Western powers was through three air corridors. It was soon clear that the whole operational strength of Transport Command was going to be required if the British garrison and the citizens of Berlin were not to starve.

The memoirs tell, with his characteristic self-deprecation and wit, of an Anglo-Irish childhood which was the prelude to a remarkably full and varied life. He was born in 1909 in Castlebar, Co Mayo, in the west of Ireland, where his father was stationed as a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The troubles of the early 1920s forced the Rainsfords family out of their Carrick-on-Shannon home and into residence in the safer haven of Belfast.

Rainsford had a brother and three sisters (of whom the youngest, Marie, survives him in Galway), and his father's pension as a retired policeman did not go far. So, after being educated in Belfast at Campbell College, and rejected by the Navy, Frederick, "undecided as to how to earn a living", went to Kynna as a pupil farmer on the Mau Escarpment.

The Depression brought this episode to an end, so he enrolled as an agricultural student at Queen's University, Belfast, where he became president of the literary and debating society, the Literacy. At university he learned to fly and in 1936 he was commissioned in the RAF and served at various stations in England before the outbreak of war.

First he was involved in training pilots; then in 1941 he was sent to command Wellington bomber squadron in North Africa. Flying from Kabrit on the Suez Canal, the Wellingtons tried to support the Army by cutting off the Germans' sea-borne supplies, raiding Benghazi harbour night after night.

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## Ambroise Roux

SOME 20 years after the death of Georges Pompidou a large seminar was held in Paris to discuss the life and work of the former President. Naturally, much was said about his literary scholarship, his experience as managing director of Rothschild's bank, his political and diplomatic skills. Towards the end of the two-day meeting attention was turned to economic matters.

It was then that Ambroise Roux made his appearance. A well-dressed and impressive man, he spoke shortly and positively. Georges Pompidou, he said, was a peasant. He explained that he was using the term in its most noble sense, but he went on to explain. Pompidou detested technocrats, he would never (Roux believed) have been in favour of the Maastricht Agreement: he was the Colbert of the 20th century. Roux told how he had guided him in the move to a successful nuclear system in France.

These remarks obviously caused offence to the officials present who had advised Pompidou on industrial matters. The chairman endeavoured to smooth matters by speaking of the traditional rivalry between the Ecole Normale Supérieure (where Pompidou had studied) and the Ecole Polytechnique which Roux had chosen. But this was not only a statement made by the grand old man of French capitalism with reference to the planners, it was also a claim of importance which was typically controversial. Now that Ambroise



Roux has died we have to recognise how his assessments of what he had done were frequently contradicted by other authorities. He was a character.

Roux's father was in newspaper management and his mother was related to the pharmacist family Poulenc. After graduating from the Polytechnique he went to the office of Jean-Marie Louvel, who was from 1951 to 1954 the Social Catholic Minister for Industry and who had a particular interest in Euratom and in the construction of the Common Market.

He maintained his relations with Louvel and having established himself within the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité, he arranged for the former minister to become president of the group. He always appeared as his likely successor, and when Louvel died in 1970, Roux became president. It was as president of this powerful group, as vice-president of the Comité du Patronat Français, and as the president of the Commission Economique Générale, that Roux became a close adviser to Pompidou.

He built many factories. He acquired many companies. He sat on many boards. He became the supreme example of the French system whereby a powerful president could not be controlled by boards or by shareholders. Nor did he ever think it necessary to consult with the trade unions.

He suffered defeats. His friendly relationship with Pompidou was not paralleled by friendship with Giscard d'Estaing and, although his personal relations with Mitterrand were good, he could not escape the nationalisations that followed his election to the Presidency in 1981. He was obliged to resign from the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité when he immediately launched his most famous idea. In 1982 he created Afep (Associations Françaises des Entreprises Privées), the organization which would protect the interests of private enterprise against the encroachments of the state. It was meant to take the

place of the Comité du Patronat Français which Roux thought was inept since it did not have strong political views. Bringing together in the Hôtel Crillon some 24 presidents of the biggest business interests, what he called "l'establishment", he sought to give vigour to French capitalism.

But once again contacts were important. He became a close friend of Edouard Balladur, who became Minister for Finance in the co-habitation government of 1986. And he became a regular visitor to the Elysée, since Mitterrand's socialism did not prevent him from taking a keen interest in the markets. Preaching a discretion that he did not always follow himself, Roux was able to discuss all aspects of economic affairs with governments. He believed that businesses were united because they had common interests and that where there were rivalries he could bring about reconciliations. In the matter of appointments to important posts, whether in business or in government, he was prevented from taking a keen interest in the markets. Preaching a discretion that he did not always follow himself, Roux was able to discuss all aspects of economic affairs with governments. He believed that businesses were united because they had common interests and that where there were rivalries he could bring about reconciliations. In the matter of appointments to important posts, whether in business or in government, he was

surprised by that he had never invested a penny of his own money in any of his enterprises.

Perhaps "l'Ambroise", as he was sometimes called, or "le President" as he was often called, symbolised the division between a powerful minority and the disenfranchised masses which characterised France. All Ambroise Roux's private interests were very special. He was a royalist who attended mass every January on the anniversary of Louis XVI's execution. He was a spiritualist who published a book on table-turning. He took three months' holiday every summer to cultivate his garden at Tregastel, on the granite coast of Brittany. He was someone who stood apart.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON

Ambroise Roux, businessman; born Piscop, France 26 June 1921; married Françoise Marion (one son, one daughter); died Montfort-l'Amour, France 1 April 1999.

He was such that such errors were brushed aside.

Roux played his role as the incarnation of money and power. As president of the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité he had his private life and a private cinema; he claimed to have the finest private address book in France; he controlled the dress of his staff (women were never allowed to wear trousers). He liked nothing better than to refuse to give interviews to journalists, but then to invite them to informal conversations when, whilst smoking a large cigar, he would surprise them by saying that he had never invested a penny of his own money in any of his enterprises.

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DOROTHEA BROOKING

YOUR EXCELLENT obituary of Dorothaea Brooking (by June Averill 6 April) fails to mention two very important things, writes Richard Wade.

First, her quite extraordinary ability to produce children. In the days when there was no recording and all drama had to be transmitted live, performing was a very exacting and terrifying experience. For young children who had never experienced it before, it must have been little short of terrifying. However, Dorothaea had the ability to bring out the very best from them. I have seen her extract the most moving performances from children of 12 and 13 who by the time they had been through her exacting rehearsals

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS, MEMORIAL SERVICES

IN MEMORIAM

APPOINTMENTS



# There's method in the madness

A novel without the letter 'e'? A poem that would take 190 million years to read? Welcome to Oulipo, where writing is played strictly by the rules. By Kevin Jackson

**T**o be or not to be: that was the quotation I was in Paris, being given a beginner's lesson in a particular literary technique by the writer and classic historian Marcel Benabou.

"Choose a famous line of English poetry," he instructed. Too bemused for not too bemused? to come up with anything more original, I opted for the first line of Hamlet's soliloquy.

"Good. Now think of a replacement for the verb 'to be'." "How about 'to agree'?" "Very good. Now, a word that rhymes with 'question'." "OK, 'digestion'." "And now what do you have?" "To agree or to agree: that is digestion." (Which just about passes muster as an accurate definition, if you think of idiomatic expressions such as "cheese doesn't agree with me" or "Void! We have created a new line of English verse."

Not a very impressive line, perhaps, but, as I say, this was only a beginner's lesson. Had I been able to stay in Paris for a few more days, Benabou might have been able to give me lessons in other, more advanced techniques employed by the Oulipo, a writers' group of which he is the "Definitively Provisional Secretary". Application of some of these Oulipian techniques to Shakespeare's lines may result in, for example, "To be or not to be: that's the problem" (diagram in D); "To be or not to be: that is not the question" (negation); "To beccon or not to beccon: that is the quinsy" (transposition, W+7); "I, . . . at his best: bet on toot or quit" (ogram); "At

a bier, a nutty boy, too, beats the queasy tone" (homoeconsatism); "Two-beer naughty beat shatters equation" (homophony); or the charming snowball:

I am all mute after seeing Hamlet's annoying emergency yourstruly Shakespeare

Readers curious to see what other diverting trifles may be prepared from the Bard's chestnut should turn at once to page 111 (*a palindrome, I note*) of the newly published *Oulipo Compendium*, edited by Harry Mathews and Alastair Brothman (Atlas Press), which prints the complete text of Mr Mathews' '35 Variations on a Theme from Shakespeare', as well as many other feats of ingenuity by that alert, alarming, allusive and altogether admirable American author.

The *Oulipo Compendium* is, appropriately, the most comprehensive guide to the work of the Oulipo that has so far appeared in English.

If you've already heard of the Oulipo, you'll probably have made up your mind as to the wisdom or folly of their collective enterprise. If you haven't, but have been willing to venture at least as far as this paragraph into uncharted territory, you'll have worked out that Oulipianism has at least something to do with

verbal games-playing. You deserve, at least, the courtesy of a little historical background.

Put most simply (a practice few Oulipians would tend to favour: unless to simplify involved, say, stripping away all the consonants from a sentence: "e o o o e: a i e u ie u..."), the Oulipo is a society of authors, mostly French, with a light sprinkling of Anglophones, who have devoted themselves to the production of highly idiosyncratic literary works - ranging in scale from the miniature (such as a one-letter poem by François Le Lioenais, which reads, in full, "T") to the epic, such as Georges Perec's *La Vie, mode d'emploi* (*Life is User's Manual*) - all of which are written in accordance with strict, sometimes impossibly strict, self-imposed formal constraints.

(The preceding paragraph was made of a single sentence: a childishly easy dissection.) Probably the most commonly cited example of the impossibly strict constraint is Perec's lipogrammatic novel *La disparition*, which never employs the letter "e", and which has been translated into English by Gilbert Adair under the title *A Void*. Both the French and the English versions include a miniature anthology of well-known poems, lipogrammatised into elessness, so that in Adair's version "To be or not to be" suffers the outrageous fortune of mutation into "Living or not living".

Perec went on to write a novella, *Les revenentes*, in which those repressed as returned with a vengeance, and usurped the place of all the other vowels; this work has

also been translated into English, by Ian Monk, as *The Exeter Text*.

But I flee from my principal theme. (To flee or not to flee, let that be digression.) Some of Oulipo's leading lights, like Perec himself, have managed to become fairly well known around the world despite the relative obscurity of their party of allegiance. Italo Calvino was a member, and his novels *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* (based on the Tarot deck of cards) and *if on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (based on some formulations by the semiologist AJ Greimas) are Oulipian fictions that have won a more general readership. Raymond Queneau, still probably best known in Britain for his best-selling novel *Zazie dans le Métro*, was, in effect, the movement's founding father - or as one Oulipian put it: "the members of the Oulipo are characters in an unwritten novel by Raymond Queneau."

To be (or, no, forget it) more prosaic, the Oulipo, or *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* (Workshop for potential literature) was founded on 24 November 1960, at a meeting of

mathematicians and writers convened by Queneau and François Le Lioenais (1901-1984). Queneau had recently been at work on his mind-boggling text *100,000,000,000 Poems*, a sequence of 10 sonnets, printed on pages that are cut along each line from the edge of page towards spine, so that the lines can be read in a total of 10 to the power 14 possible combinations. (Queneau calculated that it would take 190,258,751 years to read.) While at work on this singular effort, Queneau asked Le Lioenais for help and advice: their discussions soon broadened out into more general questions as to how mathematical structures might be incorporated into literature.

Before long, the founding members of Oulipo had modified this original brief into something closer to its present form: an investigation of the fun and profit to be found in the constraint. Le Lioenais also presided over the foundation of several kindred research groups, known as the Oux-pos, where "x" denotes the field of activity: hence the Oulipo, for work in the visual arts, and the

Oulipo (Ouvroir de Littérature Policière Potentielle), for detective fiction, as well as the Oubapo (comic strips), Oucupo (cooking), Ouhistpo (history), Oumupo (music), Ouphopo (photography) and Outrapo (tragi-comedy).

You have been very patient with me, hypothetical reader, but I'm sure that you are now bursting to say something along the lines of "Yes, yes, but is it just a matter of party-games for the over-educated?" Well, *de gustibus* and all that. My immediate replies would be "Both" or "I can certainly say that Oulipian writing has given me a lot of pleasure".

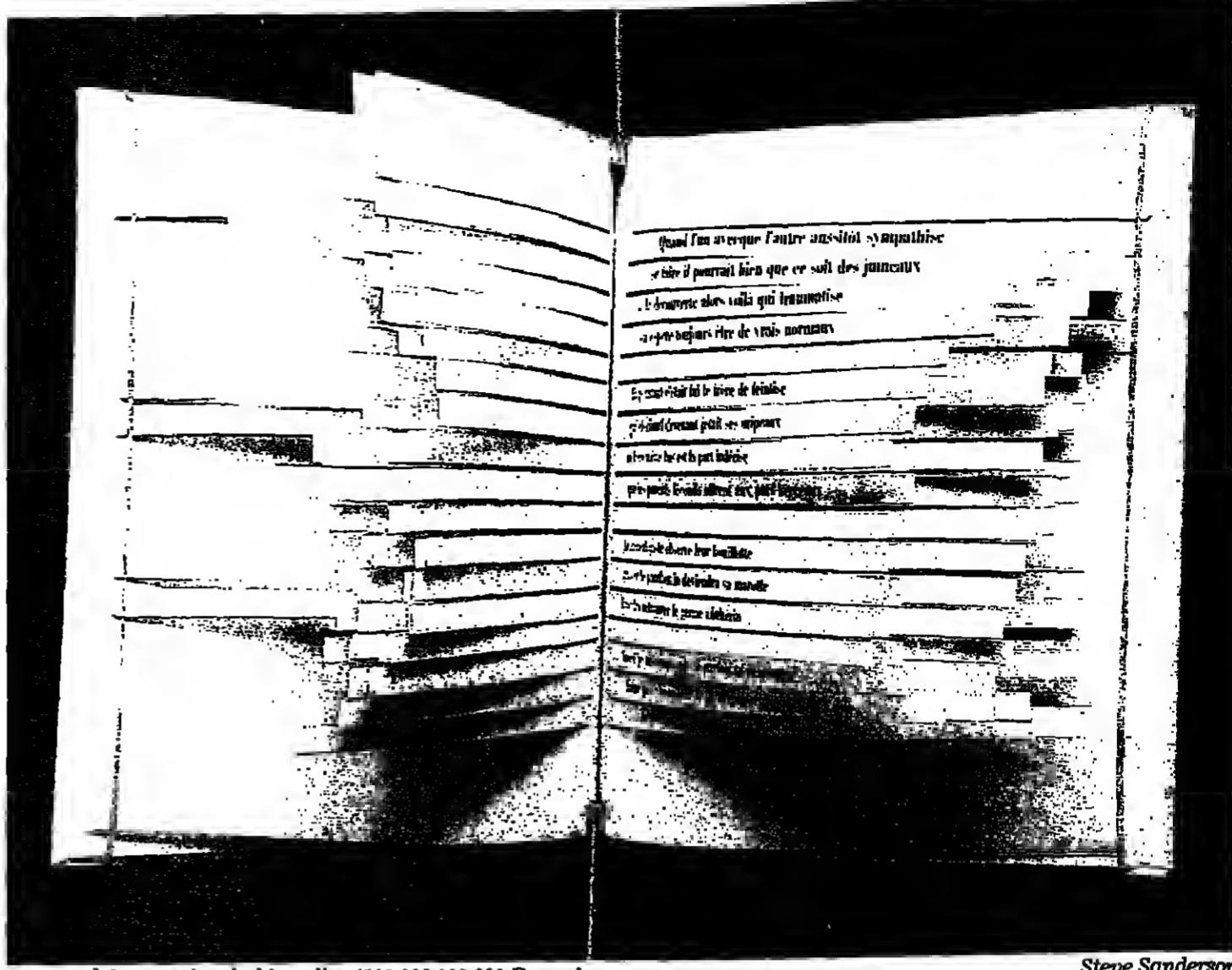
Nor is it all about literary fun and frolics. For Jacques Roubaud, a professor of mathematics, novelist and, by some reckonings, France's most distinguished living poet, Oulipian techniques have been a way both of surmounting writer's block and of coming to terms with bereavement. His autobiographical fiction, *The Great Fire of London*, is heartbreakingly, Marcel Benabou, too, has produced searching Oulip-

ian autobiography, notably in *Why I Have Not Written Any of My Books*.

When I asked him for a general statement of the value of Oulipian research and composition, he said: "all we are really doing is rediscovering what people found at the very beginnings of literature. If you look at ancient Chinese writing, pre-Islamic writing, Hebrew writing... you'll find that there is this same desire to explore the possibilities of languages and structures."

On a more prosaic level, every working journalist understands the pressures and pleasures of numerical constraint. My editor, for example, insisted that this piece should be 1400 words long. Well, so it is: exactly 1400. I took such care to make it precise that I'm brooding about the possibility of charging him extra for it. To flee or not to flee, that's my obsession.

'Oulipo Compendium' and 'The Way Home' by Harry Mathews are available at good bookshops or direct from BCM Atlas Press, London WC1N 3XX



Raymond Queneau's mind-boggling '100,000,000,000 Poems'

Steve Sanderson

THE WEEK IN REVIEW					
	THE FILM HIGH ART	THE MUSICAL MAMMA MIA!			
OVERVIEW	Lisa Cholodenko's picture charts the burgeoning affair between junkie photographer Lucy (Ally Sheedy) and magazine editor Syd (Radha Mitchell), while taking potshots at the trivial nature of New York living.	Platform boots and white Lycra fashion Phyllida Lloyd's first musical. The greatest hits of Abba are seasoned with the story of a young girl's quest to discover the true identity of her father, on the eve of her wedding.			
CRITICAL VIEW	"Beautifully shot and hauntingly scored, this film stays in the bloodstream long after the credits have rolled," wrote Charlotte O'Sullivan. "Visually and verbally compelling... the two leads are superb," declared <i>The Guardian</i> . "Though the milieu may be phoney, the feeling is authentic," decided <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> . "Sheedy and Mitchell prove that gay eroticism in cinema can bypass pornography to find the heart and mind," stated <i>The Financial Times</i> . "High Art isn't high art, but it's a beguiling love story: gold spun 'out of grime,'" revealed <i>The Express</i> , while <i>Time Out</i> deemed it "keenly observed... palpable erotic charge."	"Ridiculously enjoyable... [this] handsome production provides a terrific mood of airborne silliness," cried Paul Taylor. "A notch above those West End musicals that have rehashed yesterday's pop songs with shabby sets and scrappy storylines," asserted the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> . "Catchy, enjoyable, melodic, but a bit bland," muttered <i>The Daily Mail</i> ; pronounced it: "Cheekily conceived and thoroughly enjoyable." "Abba fans will forgive anything. And with so much fun in the theatrical air, we might as well indulge them," said <i>The Times</i> . "Mamma Mia! lies heavy on this dyspeptic stomach," grumbled the <i>Evening Standard</i> .			
OUR VIEW	An elegant and involving love story that boasts one of the performances of the year from ex-Bratpacker Ally Sheedy.	Lloyd's foray into musicals is a welcome one. Cleverly integrating a plot into a host of Abba hits, <i>Mamma Mia!</i> is riotous good fun.			
ON VIEW	<i>High Art</i> is on nationwide release, cert. 18. 101 minutes	<i>Mamma Mia!</i> is booking at the Prince Edward Theatre, London SE1 until 15 May. For bookings and enquiries call 0171-928 6363			
KEY	EXCELLENT	GOOD	OK	POOR	DEADLY

## From Finland with fear

### CLASSICAL

KULLERVO  
SYMPHONY HALL  
BIRMINGHAM

FRATRICIDE, SEDUCTION, incest and suicide: *Kullervo* is not a tale for the squeamish. But it fired the creative imagination of the young Jean Sibelius during his studies in 1890s Vienna. Repeatedly the composer returned to mine the riches of Elias Lönnrot's poetic reworking of the *Köleröö* legends which lent confidence to Finland's emerging national consciousness. Sibelius' oeuvre itself became a crucial part of that process.

His *Kullervo* symphony, first heard in Helsinki in 1893, is a giant of a work, just predating *Korelio*, and early versions of *En Saga* and the *Leeminkäinen Legend*. Yet it is no sprawling giant, but a rich-textured narrative full of contrast and incident, often almost visual, with a massive 25-minute central section in which men's chorus, soprano and baritone soloists scarily evoke events surrounding the young hero's

heading into a fevered but never exaggerated breakdown.

"There have been more electrifying

Hamilts but not many much wittier or more intelligently philosophical," gushed the *Daily Telegraph*, adding "with his delicate, curiously waxen face, Rhys is a hypersensitive Hamlet... heading into a fevered but never exaggerated breakdown."

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Hamilts but not many much witt

# Dissonant voices, still lives

Stravinsky described the magical sound of Georgian singers as the most virile he had ever heard. Now M'tiebi, a male voice choir, are showing British audiences what he meant. By Michael Church

**M**ake love not war. But if you must make war, then at least make it with music. Two millennia before Scots highlanders were piped into battle, the Greek historian Xenophon noted how the Mosiniki tribe readied themselves for combat. "The warriors stood in rows like a choir then one of them began and all the others joined in, marching to the rhythm of the song." You couldn't wish for a neater image of Georgia today, which is where the Mosiniki once came from.

Georgia may not - mercifully - be in the same league as Kosovo, but it has always been strife-torn. It celebrated its emancipation from the Soviet empire with a civil war which has left Tbilisi, its capital, impoverished. Yet Tbilisi remains one of the most musical cities on earth.

"I was born twice," said Chaliapin, the great Russian bass. "In Kazan I opened my eyes to life, and in Tbilisi to music." Here Tchaikovsky conducted, Verdi reworked Aida, and a host of virtuosos emerged from the conservatory. Wander round that Conservatory now and you realise both the strength of Tbilisi's musical will and the scale of its problems. The building is decaying and the instruments are beaten up, but the young pianists and violinists are outstanding.

But music in Tbilisi is primarily an amateur affair. Walk into almost any Orthodox church on Sunday morning and you'll hear singing which is warmer and sunnier than its lugubrious Russian equivalent. Outside the street they had made through villages where such things were still routinely sung. There was a world of difference, Edisher insisted, between the subtly Westernised music with which professional Georgian



Edisher Garakanidze, Georgia's leading ethnomusicologist, who recently died in a car crash

rectly descended from those Xenophon found in 401BC.

Last year I watched Edisher Garakanidze, Georgia's leading ethnomusicologist, coach a children's choir he had founded to foster these ancient forms. With ages ranging from four to 15, they conjured up their dark, three-part harmonies with rapt concentration: these were the fruits, he told me, of a trawl they had made through villages where such

things were still routinely sung. There was a world of difference, Edisher insisted, between the subtly Westernised music with which professional Georgian

folk-groups toured abroad, and the real unsanitised thing.

If I were to revisit Georgia, he would show me. Coming from this diffident but inspiring man, this was an offer I could not refuse.

Four months ago Edisher died with his wife and daughter in a car crash. End of story? No, a new beginning. Edisher's 17-year-old son Gigi has just arrived in Britain with M'tiebi - the male-voice choir which Edisher also founded and ran - for a tour beginning and ending at the Union Chapel in Islington. And only now are those

who knew Edisher realising

the true extent of his influence. Ring an American called Frank Kane in Paris, I'm told. Kane tells me of meeting Edisher in 1984, and of being inspired by him to found a Georgian choir in America. That choir is still going strong, but Kane has in the meantime set up a similar one in France. The CD he sends me (*Soupra*, on the ARB label) sounds remarkably authentic, given that none of his singers are Georgian; his choir, Marani, do regular exchanges with singers in Georgian villages.

Ring a theatre director called Joan Mills in Aberystwyth, they say, it emerges that over the past five years Edisher had made regular tutorial visits to Wales, and that next week's Giving Voice festival will celebrate him with a series of workshops. Mills, moreover, is finishing a book which Edisher left uncompleted: *99 Georgian Songs - a Manual for Beginners*. "Wherever he was," says Mills, "he seemed to light up the room."

Dropping in at the studio of the Royal National Theatre, I hear singing - from a group of actors under the baton of musicologist Helen Chadwick - which might have come

straight out of Tbilisi. Chadwick first encountered Edisher in Wales, but then went to collect songs with him in Georgia. Echoing a phrase much used by his disciples, she says she "just wanted to be inside that music".

That is a suitably physical metaphor for a profoundly physical experience which has long fascinated Western musicians. On hearing a yodelling descent from the province of Guria, Stravinsky commented: "It is the most virile vocal performance I have ever heard." Georgian polyphony - usually in three parts - is full of dissonant (but lovingly dwelt-on) vocal collisions.

Just as Christian and pagan rituals merged in Georgia, so did sacred and secular forms of music. But in one key respect Georgian polyphony has remained uncontaminated by the West. Georgian polyphony is tuned to a modal scale: it's not based on Western harmonies. Octaves are out: Georgians think in fifths, and the effect on Western ears can be disorienting, as though the singing is flat.

That is why the celebrated Rustavi choir (to be heard on the St Petersburg label) earned Edisher's mild contempt. For those Georgians don't sing "flat": their tuning has been cleaned up, so as to be acceptable to Western ears. And that is why the music of M'tiebi - the word means morning star - is significant. These singers are amateurs - architects, engineers, computer-programmers - and proud of it; the only trained musician among them was Edisher. But to hear them sing their wedding songs, funeral laments, and Christmas carols at the Union Chapel last night, was to enter a world of irresistible magic - as Edisher Garakanidze's growing posthumous following confirms.

## Accent U8 the positive

### THE WEEK IN RADIO

RADIO I ran a vivid report last month on the toxicity of caffeine - the predisposition of drinkers to heart disease, stroke, and so on. Just to see if it was possible, I cut out not just exotic coffee, but friendly old tea as well, like Philip Marlowe struck with a cold, a black pool opened up beneath me and I dived in.

In a daze of caffeine cold-turkey, I now hallucinate beverages everywhere - thus Anna Massie scrupulously announcing the phrase "rump Parliament" on the daily segment of *This Sceptred Isle* (R4). conjures up Earl Grey and bone china, with a palpable macaroon in the saucer:

Martin Jarvis, reading *Just William* - The 80th Anniversary (R4) with his familiar gravelly disdain, treats the listener to freshly ground old Java.

Nicholas Parsons in *That Reminds Me* (R4), looking back over his career, is the very essence of that 1960s standby, Camp coffee.

The *Archers* (R4), ever a smorgasbord of accent, class and public service announcement, continues to offer characters who evoke everything from toffee-hazelnut-mochaccino to PG pyramid teabags. The actor Jim Broadbent said recently that *The Archers* was one programme he could be relied upon to get up for - in order to switch it off. A Pleasantville with problems, Ambridge plays host to the banal and the apocalyptic in deference to the new Reithian spirit of globalisation - panto, adultery, vegetarianism, bovine tuberculosis, illegitimacy, genetically

modified crops, and death - Joe Orton re-written by James Herriot.

Ambridge is still just, virgin territory to one millennial *Leitmotif* - Salman Rushdie, or "Salman Rushdie, a writer", as he described himself after the first Reith Lecture (R4) on "Globalisation". Admittedly Rushdie followed such hands-ups as Michael "ex-Cabinet Minister" Portillo, Shirley "Also an ex-Cabinet Minister" Williams and John "ex-UK Government Member" Redwood, the C3PO of All Souls. But as Rushdie is virtually in the Coca-Cola league of brand awareness, this seemed to constitute backing in the lime-light of his part.

This year's lecturer, Anthony Giddens, had stated that Globalisation should not mean Westernisation, which is fine, but was unable to allay the suspicion that it can only really be Generalisation, in every sense. This was, though, very much a curtain-raiser, with the emphasis on the wood rather than the trees. As one journalist commented, the failure or success of globalisation will be determined by the one third of the world's population who live in India and China. How to bring this about, Giddens has four more mission statements in which to specify. For the moment, he is all miso soup - nourishing but cloudy.

PIP TORRENS

## THE INDEPENDENT Champagne Breaks

The *Independent/Independent on Sunday* have joined forces with SeaFrance European Life to offer you excellent discounts on holidays to Champagne. From just £49 per person you can take a break in the heart of the Champagne region, inclusive of return ferry crossing, two nights' accommodation and a complimentary bottle of champagne on your arrival.

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Travel with SeaFrance from Dover to Calais on any one of the 15 daily crossings and start your holiday to France the moment you step on board. Once in the famous Champagne region you can visit the major champagne cellars such as Mercier and Moët, where guided tours give you an insight into the whole magical champagne production process. While you are there, you can make excellent savings by stocking up on as much champagne as you can carry for your own celebrations at home. With its expertise in tailor-making self-drive holidays to France, SeaFrance European Life has specially selected four hotels for this exclusive offer, ranging from two to four stars.

### TO BOOK YOUR CHAMPAGNE BREAK

Simply call SeaFrance European Life on 0870 242 4455, quoting The Independent Champagne Offer. To qualify for your offer you must collect four of the ten tokens that will be printed in *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday* from Friday 9 April to Sunday 18 April (inclusive). At least one of the tokens must be from *The Independent on Sunday*. Then, to validate your offer after booking, send your tokens with the completed application form to The Independent Champagne Offer, SeaFrance European Life, 10 Kerry Street, Leeds, LS18 4AW. Please note that all bookings must be made between 10 April and 30 April 1999 (inclusive).

#### PARTICIPATING HOTELS

##### Epernay, Le Thibault IV

★ ★ Located 20km south of Epernay on the Champagne Route in the heart of the Champagne region. Le Thibault offers a good standard of accommodation with reasonably sized rooms and en suite bathrooms. The hotel's restaurant is well known across the Champagne area, serving both gastronomic menus and champagne dinners. The hotel can arrange a free visit to local wine-cellars and, although this does not include wine-tasting, we're sure that it will be an insight into the Champagne world!



##### Epernay, Hostellerie de la Reine Blanche

★ ★★ The village of Vertus lies 20km south of Epernay on the Champagne Route in the heart of the Champagne region. The charm and warmth offered by the Hostellerie de la Reine Blanche is quite typical of the hotels in this region. The hotel has a swimming-pool, sauna and fitness room and the bedrooms are large and sumptuously decorated, with en suite bathrooms. The Hostellerie also boasts wine-cellars holding vintages dating back to 1929 to accompany its restaurant's fine gastronomic cuisine.



##### Reims, L'Assiette Champenoise

★★★

Located just 2km from the centre of Reims, with its magnificent Gothic cathedral and famous champagne cellars. Set in large grounds, this exquisite hotel offers excellent facilities and a high level of comfort in relaxing surroundings. In addition to the heated indoor swimming-pool, guests have free use of the sauna. A gastronomic experience at the popular restaurant is certainly not to be missed. All bedrooms have satellite TV and mini-bar. Buffet breakfast and private outdoor parking.



#### The Independent Champagne Offer 0870 242 4455

Mon-Thurs 9am-8pm, Fri-Sat 9am-5.30pm, Sun 11am-4pm  
For further information on SeaFrance European Life, you can email them or visit their website.  
el@frenchlife.demon.co.uk www.europeanlife.co.uk

Destination and hotel name	BASED ON 2 NIGHTS OCCUPYING 2 ROOMS		10/04-30/04		01/05-27/05		28/05-31/08		01/09-31/10	
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Epernay Le Thibault IV	49	27	59	28	69	29	59	28		
Troyes Forêt d'Orient	69	28	79	89	31	79	29			
Epernay La Reine Blanche	79	37	89	99	40	89	38			
Reims Assiette Champenoise	89	38	99	42	109	44	99	42		

Destination and hotel name	BASED ON 1 NIGHT OCCUPYING 1 ROOM		10/04-30/04		01/05-27/05		28/05-31/08		01/09-31/10	
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Epernay La Reine Blanche	89	37	99	38	109	40	99	38		
Reims Assiette Champenoise	99	38	109	42	119	44	109	42		

All prices shown are per person and in pounds sterling

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## THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

# No sympathy for the devil

Robert Irwin – cult novelist, Arabic scholar, ex-wizard and ace Roller-blader – meets Jane Jakeman

**R**ecently the right-wing historian, David Irving, was interviewed on television. As Irving went on pronouncing his revisionist views about the Nazi era, a bearded figure stole the show by Roller-blading across the background, figuratively waving two fingers at the goings-on in front. The blade-runner was Robert Irwin, academic, novelist and a great liberal experimenter in the Sixties.

It was, apparently, an accident. He did not intend to destroy Irving's moment of glory, though he's bullish about his skill. "Frankly, I'm rather a good skater – TV crews often film me," says Irwin, in all other respects a model of modesty. "Roller-blading keeps me sane and saves me physically." He often Roller-blades in London parks, keeping a pencil in his pocket to write as he twirls.

Irwin is not only a survivor of the tumultuous Sixties; he can even remember the decade. He shouldn't be able to, of course: he should be a shambling wreck, his mind and body reduced to tatters. But there's no justice in this world. Here is one of the best minds of that generation and, far from having dashed itself to pieces between the ghastly Scylla and Charybdis of drugs and hooch, it is still functioning as brightly as ever.

Irwin is one of our leading Arabic scholars, and the author of five well-reviewed novels, with another out next week (*Satan Wants Me*, Dedalus, £1.99). The two worlds do overlap: his first work of fiction, *The Arabian Nightmare*, had an archetypal success story. It was published by a small press in 1983, and sales were sagging until Christie's found themselves with a clutch of medieval Arabic manuscripts to be auctioned.

No one then knew what they were about. Irwin is one of the few people in the country, probably in the world, who can pick up a medieval Arabic document and read it like today's Sun. Sometimes, indeed, it may turn out to have a strange similarity, containing perhaps an account of the "crocodile position" assumed by patrons in the brothels of Cairo or a treatise on the concept of "magnetic meat".

On this occasion, the staff of Christie's sent out for his learned works, and into the bargain got a copy of *The Arabian Nightmare*. One of them liked it so much that she sent it to a friend in Germany, who translated it and recommended it for publication. So successful was it that Viking took it up and published the English text again.

This engrossing and totally original tale of metamorphoses and night feasts, set in medieval Cairo, has since become a runaway success. It's worthy of *The Arabian Nights*, on which Irwin has published a commentary, and which he studies with a special viewpoint. "How do these Arab storytellers work? What are the creative mechanisms? I'm looking at it partly as an academic, but also as somebody who does it himself."

Irwin gave up academic to become a house-husband and to write fiction. He was then absorbed with household duties and the care of their small daughter while his wife resumed her career as a high-ranking official of Parliament. He knew that he wanted to write, but was not certain that he would in fact pursue either his scholarly work or that of the novelist.

That was 20 years ago, and he has now carved out an interlinked career in both



## ROBERT IRWIN, A BIOGRAPHY

Robert Irwin was born in 1946. He was educated at Epsom College and won a major scholarship to Oxford. After a lectureship at St Andrews he became a house-husband and writer, and has continued to produce both fiction and academic work. He is a widely acknowledged expert on *The Arabian Nights*. His first novel was the celebrated cult book, *The Arabian Nightmare* (1983), followed by *The Limits of Vision* (1986), *The Mysteries of*

*Algiers* (1988), *Exquisite Corpse* (1995) and *Prayer-Cushions of the Flesh* (1997). His latest book, *Satan Wants Me*, a novel of the occult set in Sixties Britain, is published next week by Dedalus. His non-fiction includes *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (1994) and *Islamic Art* (1997); his anthology of classical Arabic literature will be published by Penguin in the autumn. He lives in London with his wife and daughter.

departments, fiction and Arabic studies. The novels have been varied in settings and subjects, but certain themes run through them all. "All my novels are about madness of one kind or another – obsession, delusion, drunkenness." *The Limits of Vision* was born out of domestic claustrophobia: a housewife obsessed with dust finds herself conversing with great minds of the past, such as Leonardo and Darwin, in an imaginative investigation of suburban psychopathology. *Prayer-Cushions of the Flesh* returned to the medieval Middle East, with an erotically-charged Topkapi harem and its sexual delusions. Like Irvin's other novels, it has a suggestion of the conjurer's performance, of fiction as a series

of secret worlds opening one into another. In *Satan Wants Me*, about a Sixties hippy who falls in with the occult, Irwin quotes Aleister Crowley: "magic is a disease of language." Crowley was an intelligent man, he comments. "Magic and language are intensely bound up with each other; it's a running theme in my novel."

But he would not call himself a magical realist. "I can see why I might get reviews where I'm called that – my books are realistic but they've got a lot of magic in them, things happen which are not of the logical world. On the other hand, I actually hate magical realism: I can't stand those novels where anything goes: a house walks about on chicken legs or a woman has four

hundred babies." He is more interested in the discipline of telling the story.

The idea for *Satan Wants Me* came quite recently, on a visit to a museum of conjuring, a place full of old occult paraphernalia in the Marais district of Paris. But the interest in Crowley started a long time ago.

He bought a copy of the master's *Magic in Theory and Practice* in Oxford in 1965. "I thought I might use it for spells and didn't know I would ever use it in a novel. Trouble is, if you want a spell to achieve spectacular results, you have to do things like getting the skin of a gazelle taken from its mother when it's eight months old, and steeped in turmeric and ground-up lapis lazuli."

There's not much fear of Irwin performing Satanic rituals in darkest SE11. In any case, Peter, the narrator of *Satan Wants Me*, has a constant intelligent viewpoint on the diabolical caperings that both attract and repel him. Even as he seduces a sacrificial virgin for his dark master, he is fully aware that he is actually plotting the sexual enslavement of a perfectly nice hairdresser called Maud.

Fortunately Maud, though not exactly a harridan, is no wimp. She is a karate expert, among other attributes, and Irwin says he identifies with her more than with the colder observing brain of the central character. "Peter is cleverer than the people he's dealing with. There's always a bit of his brain that's not castrated. But I identify more with Maud. I don't want to write about clever people standing round talking."

There's also something of Irwin embodied in the writing demon, Pyewacket, who inhabits Peter from time to time. "It's the thing that makes me do what I don't want – that pops up in the head and out of the mouth. But it does represent the way writing goes when it's going well, a silent voice that comes from nowhere, almost dictation."

If this sounds shamanistic, the book nevertheless has a solid grounding in Sixties reality. It also has plenty of humour. The diabolism is enacted in cosy Swiss Cottage, and the book is full of pragmatic details such as the sudden alarming appearance of a garden gnome on a doorstep. "Mr Cosmic believed that the plaster figures of gnomes, though degraded in their present-day functions, could still serve as the foci for the chthonic powers of the earth."

The Sixties background comes not only from the writer's memory. Irwin researched it properly by looking at documentaries and magazines, and was struck by how much in that fabled decade was actually very ordinary. The mundane presences of Typhoo and Brylcreem and Woodbine continued in an unchanged world, although the razzle-dazzle of fashion and pop dominates our recollections.

Drugs, of course, had a high profile in youth culture. There are some bad trips in the book, out-of-the-body experiences that are very unpleasant indeed. "LSD was still legal when I did it," remembers Irwin. "I think there's a kind of built-in mechanism in it. The longer one goes on, the nastier the trip gets. It's downright anti-addictive."

So the author is clearly not a slave to the addictions of the Black Arts, nor to any others. When I interviewed him, however, I must confess that it had gone through my head for a moment that his home might be the house of a magician. It's built of soft red brick, set exactly where one would not expect to find a house at all, tucked between a pub and a school. It has a secretive high-walled garden; the interior has soft green walls and Indian cushions spread around. But the huge private library is in apple-pie order, and I found the commode with Pyewacket absorbed over *The Times Literary Supplement*, for which he is a consulting editor.

Irwin has a long scholarly bibliography to his credit and is currently working on a book about Orientalism. His anthology of Arabic literature is due in the autumn. It's a fearsome rate of productivity which only strict discipline can achieve. Any explorer of the irrational must have remained within the bounds of sanity to achieve it. Way out man... but not too far.

## COVER STORIES



TEN MILLION copies and a decade on, *Hannibal Lecter* is back. On 8 June, in Britain and the US, the fiction world's most notorious serial killer returns in *Hannibal* – Thomas Harris's sequel to *Silence of the Lambs*. The new novel – which landed on the desk of Harris's US editor after a long silence – is the second book in a deal reportedly worth close on \$6m. It opens seven years after Dr Lecter's escape; one of his victims uses FBI agent Clarice Starling as bait to draw the doctor out into the open, in order to wreak revenge...

BY ALL accounts, Discworld creator Terry Pratchett is not the most, er, socialised of authors. Recently he was chauffeured between events during the London Literary Festival, he insisted on reading aloud to his driver. Not from his own books, but P G Wodehouse. Shortly, as Dr Pratchett, he may have even more grandly. In July, Warwick University will bestow on him the award of Honorary Doctor of Letters.

JUST AS we thought it was safe to go back into the water comes *Close to Shore*, Michael Capuzzo's account of the rogue great white shark that inspired *Jaws*. The beast lurked off the New Jersey shoreline in 1916, killing five and maiming others. It even swam upriver, attacking boys taking a cooling dip after a day cutting corn. Eventually, a reward was offered for capture after President Wilson declared that *Something Must be Done*. So imagine the consternation when a lone fisherman found it entangled in his net. Headline publishes the book next year.

PAT CONROY may have backtracked on plans to write a sequel to *Gone with the Wind* following problems with the Mitchell Estate, but that hasn't deterred Rae Lawrence from embarking on a sequel to *Valley of the Dolls*, the late Jacqueline Susann's bestseller. Lisa Bishop, the author's trustee, uncovered sketches for a sequel, and concluded a six-figure rights deal for what's cheerfully described as "a pink trash spectacular". *Jacqueline Susann's Shadow of the Dolls*.

HARRY POTTER continues on his way to world domination. With two books in the charts and more promised, J K Rowling's debut, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, will soon be an audiobook. Stephen Fry will do the reading for the Cover to Cover label.

THE LITERATOR

## Home is where the art is

He helped melt the cold heart of Pinochet's Chile, but can he bridge the gap between gringo and Hispanic? Ilan Stavans on the Latino's dilemma

IN THE last decade, Ariel Dorfman has undergone a crucial transformation. He has ceased to be Latin American; instead, he has become something the British do not yet fully grasp: a Latino intellectual, bilingual and bicultural, ambivalent about almost everything, and most especially the place called home.

Latin is the rubric coined to describe US Hispanics acclimated to American joie de vivre yet deeply rooted in the reality south of the Rio Grande. Dorfman's north/south ambivalence is at the heart of the memoir he published last year. It manifests itself in explorations of his complex feelings not only towards Chile and the US, but also towards Spanish and English, the two tongues he communicates in with equal ease. And it is also in the texture of this novel, which, while set primarily in Seville and Santiago and New York, is an American by-product in ways his memoir never was.

Latinos have a difficult time being read in Latin America. There is much resentment for those who left. Dorfman is no exception. His literature has never been fully embraced in Chile, perhaps because he is a foreigner. (He was born in Buenos Aires, and is Jewish.)



**The Nanny and the Iceberg**  
by Ariel Dorfman  
Sceptre, £10, 360pp

In the English-language habitat, on the other hand, he has the status of a star: his work functions as a bridge across idiosyncrasies.

This is patent in *The Nanny and the Iceberg*. The book juxtaposes themes that have long obsessed him: pop culture and its ideological undercurrent, the baroque Latin American psyche, revolution and democracy. It is a bravura performance, knitted by a suave, hypnotic prose, structured in the form of a thriller with a delayed dénouement.

The main character is Gabriel McKenzie, a hybrid comfortable in e-mails and Hol-

lywood imagery, international politics and Spanish culture. Or perhaps the real protagonist is the mammoth iceberg from Antarctica. The Chilean government decides to exhibit at the World's Fair of 1992, to commemorate Columbus's arrival. The iceberg, of course, is but a metaphor: a huge structure obstructing a view of the past. Therein lies Dorfman's message: Chile, he argues, refuses to grow up. It remains incapable of confronting its past and battling the ghost of General Augusto Pinochet.

As I read, I kept on thinking of *Christopher Unborn*, the anti-utopian science-fiction novel by Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes's theme is also the Colombian Quinceañero and his prose is also inspired by the Gargantuan pyrotechnics of Salman Rushdie. The difference is the difference between an exile and an emigre artist.

While Fuentes spends part of the year in Mexico and the other part in England and the US, Dorfman is an American whose visits to Chile are promotional rendezvous. He is far more rooted in US culture than his Mexican counterpart, and his novel's main character is a foreigner. (He was born in Buenos Aires, and is Jewish.)

McKenzie is, happily, not quite a McDonald's, but not

## A man for all morgues

Fleet Street has reached its last edition, but old hacks don't fade away. Valentine Cunningham claims a masterly comedy of changing times

JOHN PRESTON is a morbidly satirical wit to die for. His second novel, *Ink*, is a lovely Chaplinesque farce set in Old Fleet Street, a daft remake of *Modern Times* for our recent Thatcher-Murdoch times, done both with a lot more Kafkin angst.

The novel's main man is Hugh Byrne, a lonesome journalist at the end of the Thatcherite Eighties who is suffering from a bout of writer's block. And that, as every cynic on his very cynical paper agrees, is an unheard-of plight. Meanwhile, the paper is being sold up the river, transplanted to some fairy palace in Docklands. Fleet Street, ancient haunt of rogues, named for the rancid sewer, the Fleet Ditch, is soon to be no more. Pissed old hacks are having to take computer lessons. Mobile phones are the thing of the future. The inkily overalled masters of the press have received their notice.

Lame-dog Hugh is about to hit his ignominious last chance posting to be sent out to investigate an anonymous Thames suicide and also the task everyone in the building fears – to be sent down into the cuttings library to compile the Queen Mother's obituary. What unfolds, as Byrne reluctantly turns old-time inves-



**Ink**  
by John Preston  
*Daily Mail*, £16.99, 428pp

tigator, is not just a cannily alleviated mystery, but a jigsaw-puzzle of interlocked deaths and disappearances that makes up a kind of exemplary parable about the virtues of old-fashioned newspaper ways.

Elegiacs pile on elegiacs. Old Fleet Street lies dying as it waits for the Queen Mother to pop her clogs. Byrne gradually works out what links the Thames jumper, the dockland Seaman's Mission, the round-the-world yachtsman, the Queen Mother once met, the missing reporter, and the dead print workers. Like someone out of Dickens' novel – Dickens, as a matter of fact – Byrne becomes a man for all

morgues. He even lives in Kensal Green, where the dead in the great cemetery call to him "like a chorus of skeletal Singing Singers". Property values in Kensal Green are not rising, but the novel's many dead keep turning out to be resurrection men. The Queen Mum, naturally, survives the ouit. Perhaps there's even hope for the survival of real journalism.

John Preston's superior touch for the comic amid gloom-making modern times does indeed suggest some such survivalism for the human spirit. Byrne's colleagues are stars in a managerial tragedy that comes wonderfully alleviated by the author's sustained genius for farce. Cliché the loopy Thatcherite birds shouldn't be fed in winter lest they lose "the will to forage"; gods his wife into eye-muscle exercises which prove worthless when she runs over the paper's editor – dashing Cliff's hopes of succeeding the old boy. Stanley, who can't alter years of habit, reads his Memorial Service address as if to copy-takers ("New par, cap T"). Those qualities that had stood him in such good stead in cap B Barnsley, comma, were to prove especially valuable when he and cap J Janice moved to cap L London, stop". Rottweiler panic

spreads when tea-boy Darren's tiny mutt runs amok. And Hugh finally clinches it with the moody Vivian when the hot-drinks dispenser explodes over them both as well as the office. All, of course, like the running Queen Mother ouit gag very unlikely – and all the lovelier for it. The novel's jokey tendencies run and run on these looping farcical threads. They make an admirably soft narrative core which exploits the most pleasing set of solstitial endings. Byrne's revenge on the boss who consigned him to the ouit room is sweet. His joy in the arms of the coffee-scoured Viv is what the Kafkesque soul needs. And when he finally eschews the scoop his gunshoeing brings him, it's because he has made one of those old-fashioned moral decisions modern business finds so "quaint". Sharp satire, absurdist relish and the elegiac desire for morality in a sordid world could hardly converge more satisfactorily.

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**5 MILLION** copies and a **C. Or. & June**, in Britain is US, the fiction world's most serial killer return **anniversary** - Thomas Harris' new novel - which landed on desk of Harris's US after a long silence - is second book in a deal reportedly worth close on seven years after his escape, one of his uses FBI agent Clarke as bait to draw the or our into the open in r to wreak revenge.

**All accounts** Dr John Terry Pratchett is most in touch of our recent while being flattered between events the London Literary val, he insisted on reading to his driver. Not from his books, but P G Wodehouse, as Dr Pratchett, he behaves even more grandly. Warwick University will on him the award of many Doctor of Letters

**AS we thought** up to now that the water was rising, Michael and what inspired the best novel of the century, *Cloud Atlas* in 1966 a film starring others in secret, attacking, torturing, and killing after it. Eventually it was about to capture President Wilson declared a meeting at a German round-table in the next year. Headline this week next year

**IN 1966** was a progressive movement which cast aside centuries of superstition and corruption. The reality is more complex, and Richard Marius's scholarly and thoughtful biography is an important contribution that should help to redress an imbalance.

In many ways, the Reformation was a disaster. It plunged Europe into a cycle of war, bloodshed and persecution. Thousands of people who might have had a peaceful existence had Luther never lived died brutal, pointless deaths. Certainly, the Church needed reform, but it is possible that Luther's impulsive, hectoring campaign actually brought the cause of reformation into disrepute.

Marius presents Luther as a complex, tortured figure, driven more by a desire to escape his personal demons than by a disinterested quest for truth. Throughout his life, he suffered bouts of paralysing depression. This took the form of a terror of death and extinction. Marius's careful analysis of Luther's sermons and letters showed that he was not much concerned with Hell. God expressed his towering wrath not so much by plunging the damned into everlasting fire, but by subjecting human beings to the annihilation of death.

Luther's fear of death was so intense that he was unable, as a young man, to read Psalm 90, which describes the evanescence of human life, burned up by God's anger. His theology of justification by faith was a desperate attempt to find a solution. It was only by experiencing their utter helplessness before God's wrath that Christians could be saved; they would thus realise at a level deeper than the cerebral that righteousness came from God, not from any good deeds.

This led to conflict with Rome. In Luther's view, the practice of selling indulgences encouraged the faithful to think that they could buy salvation, and to develop a faith that was little more than magic. When Luther found these superstitions sanctioned by the Pope, he set out to destroy the papacy. He was convinced that once Christians

would - when they got home - be able to do whatever they wanted, better than anyone else. And so on and so forth. That's why, when the critics come along, they can't understand the point of the book. All of course, are the critics, Quakers, and so on, and they are unlikely to be interested in what I'm doing. They're not interested in the politics, and can't see the point of the book. The critics are, on the other hand, the ones who understand the book. They're the ones who say, 'It's brilliant'. That's because he's made it so 'quippy'. Sharp and witty, and he's got a great sense of humour. So the critics like it. And he's got a future global classic and have that error echo down the long halls of posterity.

**NEW AUTHORS**  
A week in books  
Boyd Tonkin  
Posterity makes dunces of critics - and judges

**ANNE FINE**  
Miller and Ridley Scott's *The Duellists* are my two favourite films - maybe because Julie Christie and Harvey Keitel are, for me, the two most seductive faces on screen.

# Plenty of drudgery, not enough downsizing

**D J Taylor** is pleased to find that the suave committee-man can still turn in an honest day's toil - even if modern office life has passed him by

**QUITE WHAT** happened to Sir Keith Thomas's career is one of the great mysteries of recent academic life. *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) and *Man and the Natural World* (1983) looked to have established him as one of the leading early-modern historians of the English-speaking world. Come the late 1980s, though, the books and the scholarly articles dried up. The man whom Mrs Thatcher had passed over for the Regius Professorship re-emerged as a zealous academic administrator cum common-room fixer - head of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, President of the British Academy, Knight Bachelor and the ornament of half-a-dozen high-profile committees.

From All Souls - where he started his academic life as a prize fellow back in 1955 - to the chairmanship of the Oxford University Press finance com-

mittee is not perhaps that long a journey. All the same, the transit from professional historian to the Oxford equivalent of Mr Tulkington in *Blitzkrieg* will have surprised anyone who remembers his early 1980s incarnation, stalking into the college library to check a reference first thing on a Sunday morning.

Did the forensic impulse simply dry up? Committee land suddenly looks more alluring than the Bodleian stacks? We shall never know. In the meantime, *The Oxford Book of Work*, the first volume to which Sir Keith has put his name for 16 years, is welcome evidence that there is life in the old boy - sorry, distinguished academic *haut fonctionnaire* - yet.

Any thought that this is an academic's vacation tour is swiftly dispelled by Thomas's introduction. Its interrogative suavity will be painfully fami-

liar to anyone who ever had the misfortune to be interviewed by him. What exactly is work? And how do you do it? Is one allowed to enjoy it? How have our perceptions of it changed?

There were times in the course of this vita viva when I thought that work would be lucky to escape with a 2-2 and a lecture on the inadvisability of pursuing an academic career. Happily this bristling exercise in first principles soon yields up to the anthology proper. This is a tripartite assemblage on "The Nature of Work", "Kinds of Work" and "The Reform of Work" (the latter is filed under the single heading of "Dissatisfactions").

Taking the Thomas line, what does one look for in an anthology? Range of material? Eye for detail? The pertinent mixed with the impertinent? I wouldn't dream of patronising Sir Keith by saying

(sample, an evocative 16th-century poem which unravels "The Tudor Housewife's Day").

Thomas's claim, made in his recent defence of the OUP's decision to scrap its poetry list, that he is an avid reader of modern poetry excited a certain amount of amusement in otherwise outraged literary circles. It turns out to be true, and his compilation is full of excellent postwar verse by the likes of Bunting, Rumens and John Fuller (oddly there's no sign of John's dad, Roy, who wrote many a poem touching on office life). He also emerges as a connoisseur of early 20th-century American realists of the Dreiser/Norris/Sinclair school, and there are several terrific extracts from Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

If there's anything missing it is perhaps an absence of very much to illustrate the onset of the machine age and its effect

on the people - often very young people - caught up in it: a story like Jack London's "The Apostate", for example, in which a teenage factory-hand, having calculated that he has moved the same piece of machinery 25 million times, simply gives up, tells his mother that she can look after the family that depends on him, and goes off to sleep. Working-class testimonies of the Robert Tressell/Alan Sillitoe type are also slightly under-represented.

Drudging for a particularly brutal firm of accountants in the mid-1980s, I once came back to my desk to discover that my boss had been sacked and removed from the premises in the 25 minutes it had taken me to eat a sandwich. The bare seven pages that Thomas devotes to "Job insecurity" are insufficient to convey the unease that such modern management techniques produce in the pre-millennial labour force - a solitary blemish on what is otherwise an exemplary piece of well-work.

**D J Taylor's biography of Thackeray will be published by Chatto & Windus in September**



Office life in the machine age  
Peter Macdiarmid

**Was the Reformation a calamity for Europe, and its maker? Karen Armstrong on a flawed hero**

## Protestant despondency

**A** generation brought up on Roland Bainton's influential biography of Luther sees him as a noble precursor of the modern spirit. Summoned to the Diet of Worms to appear before the Emperor in April 1521, Luther was asked if he was prepared to submit to the ruling of the Church. He refused, concluding: "Here I stand; I can do no other." In this symbolic scene, Luther's brave defiance has been seen as an epochal affirmation of the individual's right to think as he chooses, and to express his views.

In this view, the Reformation was a progressive movement which cast aside centuries of superstition and corruption. The reality is more complex, and Richard Marius's scholarly and thoughtful biography is an important contribution that should help to redress an imbalance.

In many ways, the Reformation was a disaster. It plunged Europe into a cycle of war, bloodshed and persecution. Thousands of people who might have had a peaceful existence had Luther never lived died brutal, pointless deaths. Certainly, the Church needed reform, but it is possible that Luther's impulsive, hectoring campaign actually brought the cause of reformation into disrepute.

Marius presents Luther as a complex, tortured figure, driven more by a desire to escape his personal demons than by a disinterested quest for truth. Throughout his life, he suffered bouts of paralysing depression. This took the form of a terror of death and extinction. Marius's careful analysis of Luther's sermons and letters showed that he was not much concerned with Hell. God expressed his towering wrath not so much by plunging the damned into everlasting fire, but by subjecting human beings to the annihilation of death.

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This led to conflict with Rome. In Luther's view, the practice of selling indulgences encouraged the faithful to think that they could buy salvation, and to develop a faith that was little more than magic. When Luther found these superstitions sanctioned by the Pope, he set out to destroy the papacy. He was convinced that once Christians



Martin Luther burns the papal bull in front of the East gate of Wittenberg on 10 December 1520

heard the clear teaching of scripture, as he understood it, they would follow him. Luther also sought to liberate the German people from Roman tyranny and unite them under an emperor who lived according to the gospel.

But, as Marius shows, none of this happened. Europeans became locked in fruitless doctrinal disputes about insoluble matters. The unity of Western Christendom was shattered forever, and Europe subjected to over a century of vicious religious strife. Luther's theology seems not only to have failed the people of Wittenberg who followed him in rebellion against Rome, but brought Luther himself neither peace of mind nor spiritual relief.

Luther had thought that his theology, together with a faith that relied on scripture, would themselves reform the Church and make people live virtuous lives. This did not prove to be the case. After the first flush of enthusiasm, Lutherans became indifferent to religion, lived immoral, selfish lives, and seemed incapable of taking sermons seriously. At the end of his life, Luther berated his flock, threatening them with divine punishment.

**Martin Luther: the Christian between God and death**  
by Richard Marius  
Harvard University Press, £19.95, 542pp

ment if they did not live according to the Law. With tragic irony, the apostle of justification by faith became a furious proponent of good works.

As for Luther himself, the bouts of depression continued until the day he died. He had longed for certainty and thought he had achieved a luminous faith. But complete security seemed to elude him. As Marius shows so clearly, he developed a profound fear of human reason which, he was convinced, would lead men and women into atheism. Anybody who promoted rational faith was, in his book, a villain.

Hence his vituperative rage against Aristotle, Aquinas and Erasmus.

Despite the popular myth, Luther was not a passionate advocate of intellectual liberty. Even though he taught that Christians had a right to interpret the scriptures, he was a fierce opponent of what he deemed heresy. He also supported the burning of books. Luther's profound fear of rational thought revealed a deep insecurity. By pushing reason outside the religious sphere, he became one of the first Europeans to secularise it.

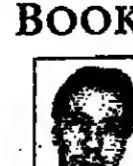
Marius writes as a detached secularist, and this is one of the strengths of his book. He has no sectarian axe to grind, and is fair to Luther, showing sympathy with his suffering and pointing out that, despite his defects, he was impelled by distress to do what good he could. His literary output was prodigious and impressive. But Marius also points out that Luther was clearly wrong to write off Catholicism as he did. The Church needed reform and its career since the Reformation is far from unblemished, but its rituals and practices continue to attract. If Marius has a fault, it is that he

does not always understand the inner dynamic of religion. His explanation of mysticism and of certain Christian doctrines is shallow; and he has little appreciation for the role of myth in spiritual life. He could have saved himself trouble by simply pointing out that Luther's faith, as lived by himself, was bad religion. The great world fails all insist that the major test of any spirituality is that it leads to practical compassion. Yet Luther's theology led him to rage and hatred.

The reader limps away from this fine biography, reeling under the distressing impact of Luther's ire. He was consumed by loathing, attacking, in the basest terms, all his theological opponents. Jews, witches, Turks, popes, peasants, his fellow reformers and his hapless congregation. In this respect, his personal theology must be one of the most monumental religious failures of all time. The fact that Protestantism was able to recover as well as it did from this unfortunate beginning is a triumph of the human spirit.

Karen Armstrong's *A History of God* is published in paperback by Vintage

### A WEEK IN BOOKS



**BOYD TONKIN**  
Posterity makes dunces of critics - and judges

Criticism of the English novel by contemporaries - even by many major writers - reveals a pretty dismal record on this score. Sometimes, the oversight stems from a plain collision of values. Recalling the pantomime high jinks of

Laurence Sterne, that strict classicist Samuel Johnson said: "Nothing odd will last. *Tristram Shandy* did not last." Oh, yes it did... Sometimes, a kind of jealous spite intrudes when critics see their own game played with a genius they could never match; hence Virginia Woolf, digging down into her private pit of snobbery to call *Ulysses* "the scratching of pimples on the body of the bootboy at Claridge's".

And, sometimes, a baffling blindness grips a great work's first "expert" audience. Next Monday and Tuesday, BBC2 will transmit Tony Marchant's impressive new adaptation of *Great Expectations*. So deeply have Pip and Estella, Miss Havisham and Magwitch, settled into our cultural bedrock, one assumes that

the novel was hailed from the off as a masterpiece. Not at all. I consulted the notices gathered in Edgar Rosenberg's exhaustive - but witty - Critical Edition of *Great Expectations* (W W Norton, £19.95). Scanning the stuck-up halfwits and cloth-eared pedants who penned many of these assessments, one remembers (as so often with reviewers of mature Dickens) the old pub-chat line on Woody Allen: "I loved his early, funny ones, but now he's gone all serious..."

How could they miss so much? The prize duffer in the Dublin University Magazine, for instance, who reads the first encounter of Pip and Magwitch on the marshes - quite simply, one of the greatest opening sequences in European fiction - and deems it a

"merciless pumping-up of grotesque or ridiculous fancies"? Because true art hurts those whose secrets it exposes? Because education (of a sort) had wrecked their sensibility? Because they thought of Dickens as one thing, and he had grown into another?

All of these, and more. In any event, the lousy press for *Great Expectations* counts as a paradigm case of critical fatuity - and an Awful Warning. Meanwhile, mid-Victorian readers (in a country of 18 million, with 30-40 per cent illiteracy) each week bought more than 100,000 copies of *All the Year Round* as the novel unfolded in its pages. With Dickens, the public, not the pundits, invariably turned out right. Could the same thing happen now?

### INSPIRATIONS NOVELIST ANNE FINE

#### The music

Bach, Mozart and Beethoven have always meant the most to me. But there are a host of pop songs from my youth that make my heart turn over fast enough.

#### The play

I'm not crazy about plays in theatres. They always seem so overwrought. Some films of plays - like Branagh's *Hamlet* - don't raise my hackles that way. But I'd rather stick to reading Shakespeare, and going to comedies instead: Sheridan, Stoppard, Ayckbourn.

#### The film

Altman's my favourite director. McCabe And Mrs

Miller and Ridley Scott's *The Duellists* are my two favourite films - maybe because Julie Christie and Harvey Keitel are, for me, the two most seductive faces on screen.

#### The artwork

I grew up without anyone teaching me the first thing about how to look at a painting. My favourites change as I see more. But Turner's landscapes and Sargent's portraits always stay with me longest.

Anne Fine's new novel is 'Charm School', published by Doubleday (£10.99)

## SPOKEN WORD

BY CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

BILL GATES  
BUSINESS  
@  
THE SPEED OF  
THOUGHT.  
BY BILL GATES

**Business@the Speed of Thought**  
Read by Bill Gates & Roger Steffens  
Penguin, 6hrs, £12.99

**PERSEVERANCE** IS necessary to get hooked on this advertorial but important audiobook. The first problem is the listening experience (sorry - business jargon is infectious). The terse prefaces to each section by Gates himself work well, but Steffens's lugubrious voice takes some getting used to. The next is content - by the end of side one you'll be wondering why this tape wasn't called *A Brief History of Microsoft*. But the examples broaden - and, whether you're a queen bee or an ant, the web will revolutionise your ways of life and work.



**Villette**  
Full-cast dramatisation  
BBC,  
3hrs, £8.99

CATHERINE BAILEY'S dramatisation of Charlotte Bronte's last novel is the most lively and arresting broadcast of a classic novel I have heard. Catherine McCormack is heartbreakingly brave and vulnerable as Lucy Snowe, Joseph Fiennes suitably prattish as the fiddle Graham, Harriet Walter brilliantly mean as Madame Beck. The spooky story of an English teacher in a French finishing school, haunted by a mysterious nun, had its origin in Charlotte's own experience of a French school - and the love she felt for the husband of its headmistress.

CALEB CARR  
THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

'Quite enthralling... a novel that plays with but never insults the intelligence'

The Times



'Carr's follow-up to THE ALIENIST is just as good a read; a thrillingly macabre drive into the fetid depths of turn-of-the-century New York ... bigger and more troubling than a mere thriller, and brilliantly maintains a ferocious grip'

Mail on Sunday



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# Basics in the bedding department

At this time of year a gardener's fancy turns to flowers, but don't forget that foliage is much more sustaining, says Anna Pavord

**P**lants, like furniture, can be divided into basics and extras. The garden needs its equivalent of bed, table and chairs, before you start worrying about the minutiae of pelmets and doorknobs. An established garden may already have some of the basics: a forsythia perhaps, a lilac, or even an overgrown buddleia.

If you arrive as a new owner of an old garden, do not be too quick to condemn existing plants. They may need pruning. They probably need feeding. But at least they are proving that they can grow. The fact that you have not put them there is not, on its own, a good enough reason for taking them to the tip. In many ways it is easier to have one or two ingredients to work with than face the daunting bareness of a brand new patch.

When choosing plants to furnish the garden, keep a few principles in mind. Will the plants have a reasonable chance of surviving in the place you have in mind (no rhododendrons in lime-ridden patches)? Will your chosen clutch perform at different seasons of the year, rather than racing out together in spring?

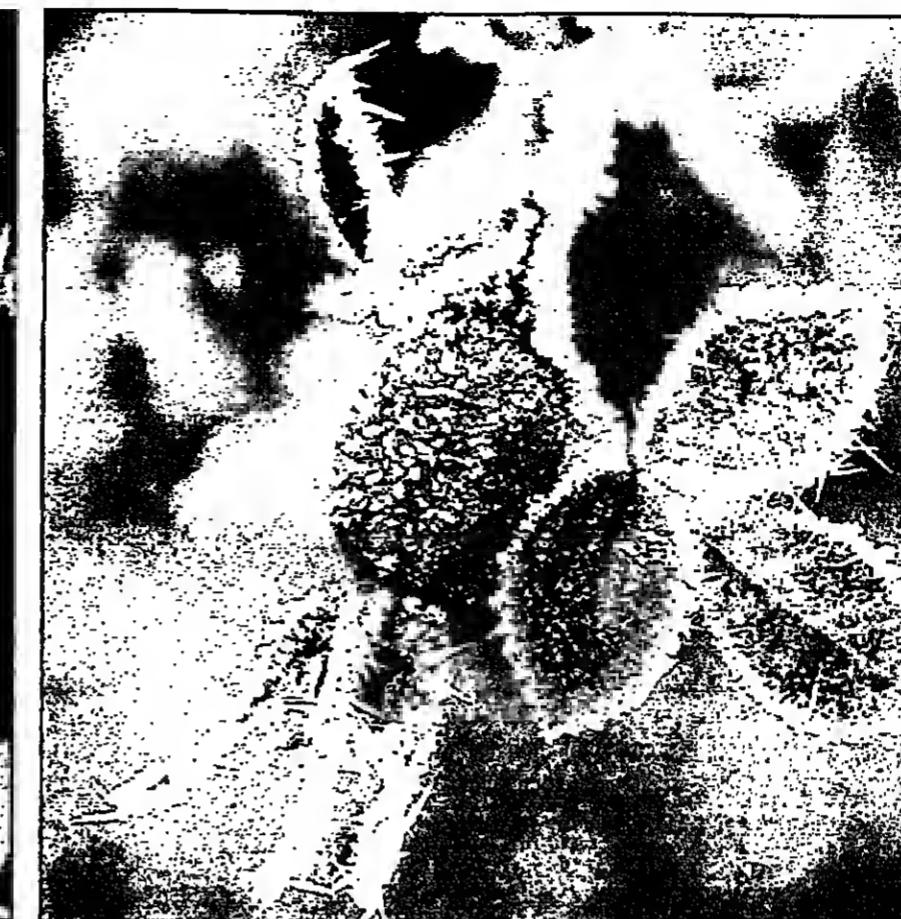
With the rising of the sap in spring, there is a corresponding stampede to the garden centre. The overflow car park was heaving at our local centre this week. Plants beckoned on every side. Without a plan, you tend to pick up only the things with flowers on them. The danger is that after a blazing spring, your garden will have no space for anything to perform for the rest of the year.

Plants already flowering in their containers are not, in any case, best buys. All plants find it easier to establish themselves below ground if they do not have to sustain a display above ground at the same time. If you can bear it, choose plants for their general shapeliness and balance rather than because they happen to be flowering.

Aim for balance, too, when you are planting your garden: balance between evergreens and deciduous plants; between plants that



The eglantine or sweet briar rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*) has single flowers in summer and brightly coloured hips in winter



Howard Rice

have their heads in the clouds and those that sprawl at ground level. Think about the form and texture of the foliage as well. Flowers may arouse the greatest passions, but foliage is more sustaining.

The showiest plants do not necessarily provide the best basic furnishing. Forsythia catches all eyes in spring, but its habit is ungainly and its leaves coarse and boring. What is this shrub going to do for you once its one and only trick is over? Zilch. The smaller the garden, the more critical you need to be of a plant's overall performance.

Some plants need to be like the good sofa that interior-design gurus tell us will hold the rest of the room together. The fact that my favourite

sofa is quietly exploding in our sitting room does not blind me to the merits of unpretentious evergreen shrubs such as osmanthus, covered now with sweet smelling flowers. It is always handsome, clipable (if that is what you want), and presents a fine background for later flashes of brilliant colour from lilies, zinnias or red hot pokers.

What you want most of all, especially in a small garden, are plants that pay rent more than once a year. This might be with berries or fruit, as showy as the flowers have been in their season. There may be seed-heads, like the allium's drumheads, that only a vandal would cut down rather than keep. The plant might provide a wave of autumn colour

before it finally packs itself away for the year. It may have bark (as with willows, dogwoods and acers) that gives the garden a dramatic new dimension in winter.

But how does one learn about these paragons? The answers to many questions lie in my colleague Ursula Buchan's new book *Plants for All Seasons*, where you will find more than 80 plants chosen for their chameleon qualities. It covers trees, shrubs, climbers and perennials. This is a wise brief but makes the book all the more useful for gardeners. At one moment you are considering the merits of a tree such as *Cornus 'Eddie's White Wonder'*, which will eventually spread at least 15ft wide. At the next you may be

rolling round the possibilities of *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*, which rarely makes a clump bigger than two feet high and wide.

Ms Buchan is a practical gardener, so she also points out what her chosen plants need by way of soil, aspect and climate. The photographs that accompany her text made me fall in love all over again with 'Eddie's White Wonder'.

In May it is covered in showy white flowers that are actually bracts. The real flowers are in the centre of the bracts, like knobs holding the bracts together. In autumn the foliage blazes up into a final fire of crimson, yellow and gold.

Sensibly, Ms Buchan warns that

"they are not suitable for all situations". They need shelter from wind and late spring frosts. They will only perform well on fertile, well-drained, neutral-to-acid soil. It is the last, intractable problem that has prevented me from planting this corus in the past. I was glad to be reminded by the author that it would be cruel in the extreme to introduce it to our cold, heavy, alkaline clay.

The peony I already have. There, the problem lies not in growing it successfully, but in steeling oneself to say its name properly. Like most other people I know who have it, I cheat and call it 'Molly the Witch'.

The foliage now is extraordinary: a greyish, pinkish, greenish bronze, with a bloom on the back of the

leaves that makes them look as precious as a Persian silk carpet. The flowers (they'll appear later this month) are a particularly bitter yellow. Even those finely tuned souls who generally shudder at yellow have to admit that this is different. And very good.

The directory of plants takes up the largest part of the book, but the first third covers more general guidelines to choosing plants. Think about foliage, writes Ms Buchan. Think about texture.

Push your mind beyond a plant's flowering period to ask yourself what happens after. Think about a plant's habit of growth and whether that is likely to change as it ages. This section is rich in the kind of advice that is only given by gardeners who do their own gardening.

Groundcover is a case in point. The coverall term can apply as easily to wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) as it can to barrenworts (the Epimedium tribe).

But, as Ms Buchan points out in her book, "the former creates a darker, more sombre atmosphere than the latter. They are not interchangeable plants just because they like the same conditions."

Nor does she forget that a good garden also needs some purely evanescent plantings, such as annual flowers and bulbs provide. You could make a garden entirely of annual flowers, but this would be the equivalent of furnishing a room only with brightly coloured cushions. It is gay, but most appropriate for those just passing through, as students do in rented flats.

Nevertheless, annuals, small seasonal perennials, and bulbs all have an important part to play in a garden, furnishing the bottom layer of a three-tiered planting scheme. Use them to build up contrasts of colour around the more solid furniture of shrubs and small trees. Now attack the garden centre. But take this book with you.

'Plants for All Seasons' by Ursula Buchan, with photographs by Howard Rice, is published by Mitchell Beazley, £16.99

## CUTTINGS

NEWS FROM THE GARDENERS' WORLD

### MILLENNIUM TREES

#### No 4: Pear

More than three quarters of the people surveyed in a NOP poll thought that Britain would come near the top of any European league table which measured wooded areas of a country in relation to its size. Sadly they are wrong. Britain is now second to bottom in terms of its tree cover! Only Ireland is worse off than we are. So we need to plant, plant, plant.

My fourth millennium tree is a pear. Grafted onto a

## A fine bunch of Northern show-offs

Contrary to popular belief, spring does not begin at Chelsea. Head for Harrogate to see the first show of the season. By Ursula Buchan

LARGE FLOWER shows are growing bigger and becoming more numerous, thanks to the seemingly limitless enthusiasm gardeners have for good plants, design ideas, gadgets, and a good day out.

Two years ago, the Royal Horticultural Society added a show in Scotland to its portfolio, and this year its influence spreads to the north-west, with one at Tatton Park in July. No doubt, if you live in the south of England, you have already ordered your tickets for the Malvern Spring Show and for the grand-daddy of them all, Chelsea.

The RHS does not have the monopoly on shows, however, even if it sometimes appears that way. The long-established Harrogate Spring Flower Show, for example, held by the North of England Horticultural Society, occurs four weeks before Chelsea, at that wonderful time when daffodils coincide with tulips, the world feels fresh and new-minded, and hopes are high.

This society was founded in 1911, the same year that Chelsea moved out of Temple Gardens to its present site in the grounds of the Royal Hospital.

The Society's principal *raison d'être* has always been the organisation of two large flower shows, in spring and autumn.

(By the by, this society should not be confused with the Northern Horticultural Society, which is based at Harlow Carr Botanical Gardens in Harrogate, and which was founded to conduct garden trials and advise amateurs living in the north of England on gardening matters, at a time when the RHS concentrated its efforts in the south.)

Pear trees are naturally narrow in outline. Though they might grow more than 20ft tall, they will never get in the way. If that is, you choose a tree growing on the right rootstock. A pear tree grafted onto dwarfing rootstock will bear fruit more quickly than a tree grafted onto rootstock of *Pyrus communis*. But it will grow like a bush, will be more difficult to keep healthy than a pear on non-dwarfing rootstock, and it will not be as long lived.

So order a pear tree from a nursery that knows what it is doing. Ask for it to be grafted on non-dwarfing rootstock. Buy a standard or half standard tree rather than a bush or pyramid.

And dream of the people 200 years hence whose beards will lift at the sight of your tree.

ANNA PAVORD



Hat couture amongst the flowers at the Harrogate Spring Show Tim Smith

The spring show followed two years later.

The enormous size of the site, much of it under cover, coupled with the ease of communication, have increased visitor numbers; 60,000 people are expected to attend the spring show over its four days, whilst perhaps 35,000 will visit the three-day autumn event.

The autumn show has also hosted a number of competitions staged by specialist plant societies (13 at the last count). There are also three important competitive exhibitions at the spring event this year: those held by the National Daffodil Society, the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society, and the Alpine Garden Society.

The show provides a covered opportunity for these specialist societies to show the world what they are about, in particular the breathtaking standards of cultivation that they achieve. Watch out for

miniature alpine gardens of 20 to 30 different plants each in 35cm-diameter terracotta pots, in the alpine marquee, as well as new daffodils bred by amateur enthusiasts in the daffodil and tulip marquee.

There is far less emphasis at Harrogate than at Chelsea on display gardens, but Douglas Knight's "Monte Garden" which makes its debut at Harrogate in April, and which was founded to conduct garden trials and advise amateurs living in the north of England on gardening matters, at a time when the RHS concentrated its efforts in the south.)

For many years, the two Harrogate shows were settled in Valley Gardens in the centre of town, but the pressure to expand, and the need to provide extensive car parking, encouraged the Society four years ago to move the autumn show out to the 22-acre Great Yorkshire Showground site on the outskirts of the town.

The show provides a covered opportunity for these specialist societies to show the world what they are about, in particular the breathtaking standards of cultivation that they achieve. Watch out for

lors of Doocaster, with an extensive list of clematis, Springwood Pleiones from Selby displaying pleiones and other terrestrial orchids, and the Hartsdale Nursery Garden of Alston in Cumbria, offering unusual plants grown at 1,100 feet above sea level.

So, if you live north of the Trent, Harrogate is the place to buy plants which will thrive in your garden, and to seek expert advice from people who really understand the conditions in your garden.

Tickets prices range from £8 to £10: tickets pre-booked before noon on 16th April will be offered at a 22 discount.

The show opens on Thursday, 22nd April and runs for four days. Telephone the North of England Horticultural Society on 0113 2561049, e-mail [www.flowershow.org.uk](http://www.flowershow.org.uk), or visit the website at [www.flowershow.org.uk](http://www.flowershow.org.uk) for further details.

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# Fir he's a jolly good fellow

**COUNTRY MATTERS**

**DUFF HART-DAVIS**

**O**n Thursday 26 October 1826, clouds hung low over the mountains around the headwaters of the Willamette River, in Oregon. Yet for the intrepid botanist-explorer David Douglas, the dull weather was of no consequence, because he made one of the most exciting discoveries of his life.

For days he had trekked through uncharted wilderness in search of a particular tree, *Pinus lambertiana*, the sugar pine; and when at last he came upon a stand of the giants, he was so astounded by their size that in his journal he cautioned himself not to exaggerate. "Lest I should never see my friends to tell them verbally of this most beautiful and immensely large tree," he wrote, "I now state the dimensions of the largest one I could find that was blown down by the wind. Three feet from the ground, 57 feet nine inches in circumference; 134 feet from the ground, 17 feet five inches."

Needless cones for his seed collection, he took his gun and began "clipping them from the branches with ball" when suddenly eight Indians appeared, covered with red paint, armed with bows and arrows. Douglas tried to explain what he was doing, but they were so threatening that he levelled his gun at them and with his left hand drew a pistol, "determined to fight for life".

After a stand-off of eight or 10 minutes, the leader relaxed, and demanded tobacco; Douglas promised him some in return for more cones, and while the Indians went to look for them, he slipped away.

That night in his camp, he was visited by a grizzly bear with two cubs. "As I could not consistently with my safety receive them so early in the morning," he wrote, "I waited daylight and accordingly did so" – that is, he shot the mother and one of the cubs, presenting the carcass of the young animal to his Indian guide, "who seemed to lay great store by it."

For Douglas, such encounters were commonplace, and from his own densely packed account, it is clear that he was an exceptional traveller, as tough as he was fearless; yet he was also an outstanding col-



Martin Page-Jones, area foreman for the Mortimer forest near Ludlow, amid a stand of 70-year-old Douglas firs

Andy Fox

lector of plants and trees, and next Wednesday, in this country, there begins a programme of nearly 40 events planned to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth.

His influence on the British landscape has been profound, for he introduced more than 200 species of plants – among them lupins, sunflowers, evening primrose, Mahonia and flowering currants – and several trees which have proved of crucial importance to forestry in Britain. FREE

Everyone will thank him for bringing home sitka spruce – now the most prolific timber tree in Britain

– but everyone who knows *Pseudotsuga menziesii* must rejoice that a lovely tree was renamed after him, the Douglas fir.

He was born on 25 July 1799 at Scone, near Perth, son of a stonemason. As a boy he kept owls and hawks, and his interest in nature led his father to apprentice him, when only 11, to the head gardener at

Scone Palace. Later, he took himself to a private school in Perth, and by constant study, as well as by trips into the Scottish Highlands, he built up a wide knowledge of botany.

In 1820, he won a place at the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow, and there met the great Sir William Hooker, who was appointed to the Chair of Botany at Glasgow University the same year. In 1823, admiring Douglas's intelligence, energy and industry, Hooker sent him to Joseph Sabine, secretary of the Horticultural Society in London, with a recommendation that the young man should be packed off to China.

When that scheme fell through, the Society sent Douglas to collect fruit trees and plants in north-east America. He carried out the mission with such success that in the following year, 1824, he was dispatched on a far more ambitious journey, to explore around the Columbia river,

in the far north-west of America. The outward voyage, round Cape Horn, alone took eight months, and when Douglas reached his destination, he found himself in a true wilderness, scarcely penetrated by Europeans. He spent the next three years travelling on foot, on horseback or by canoe, sometimes with a white companion, often with only an Indian guide, living off the land (salmon, deer and birds), menaced by natives bent on larceny if not on murder. Alternately scorched, drenched and frozen, he endured fierce hardships, yet never stopped collecting – plants, seeds, skins – and measuring everything in sight.

His zeal was unquestionable, his success enormous; but when he returned to London in the autumn of 1827, his supporters in high places found him an uncomfortable guest. In society he became prickly and boorish, and everyone was relieved when he returned to the wilds.

Before setting off again for north-west America, in 1829, he conceived the grandiose idea that he would take passage across the Bering Strait and walk home through Siberia. What a story that journey would have produced! Alas, he never got a chance to make it for, during a voyage in the Pacific, he died on the island of Hawaii in 1834, aged only 35. Rumour held that he had been murdered, but the truth seems more prosaic: he apparently fell into a pit dug to catch wild animals, and was trampled or gored by a trapped bull.

His legacy is enormous. Douglas firs have become the world timber trade's most important trees. Mature specimens rise straight and tall as the columns of an open-air cathedral, so handsome that the Forestry Commission now preserves exceptional stands well past their sell-by date. These areas, known as "retentions", will be kept indefinitely for their aesthetic value.

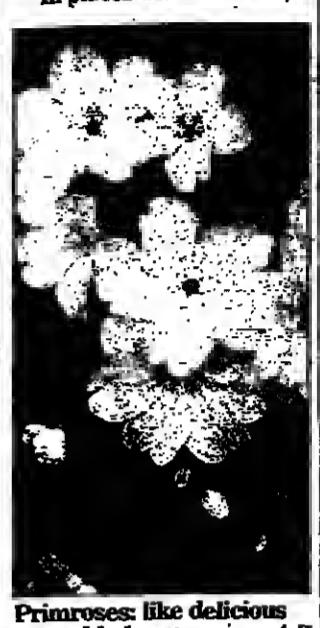
Some of Britain's best Douglas firs grow in the belt of greensand that runs through the Longleat, Maiden Bradley and Stourhead estates in Wiltshire. At Stourhead, several trees are more than a century old, 170ft tall, and growing vigorously. As timber they are extremely valuable, and fetch almost the same price per cubic foot as oak: a big tree can weigh 15 tons and be worth £1,000 or more.

And the tallest tree in Britain? You guessed it. At Dunkeld, only a dozen miles from where its namesake was born, a mighty Douglas has reached a height of 212ft, is still growing, and should carry on for another 50 years.

For information on the bicentennial programme, contact the David Douglas Society at Stornoway House, 11 Mansfield, Scone PH2 6UE, or the Forestry Commission office in Perth: 01738 442630.

**NATURE NOTES**

WILD FLOWERS are exceptionally profuse and brilliant this spring, probably because so much rain fell earlier in the year, and the winter was so mild. Snowdrops have long since come and gone, but bright yellow celandines – the other traditional harbingers of spring – are now running riot in hedges, and particularly in churchyards. In places with moist soil,



Primroses: like delicious scrambled egg

the forest floor is dusted with drifts of delicate, white-petaled wood anemones, which need light, and so bloom before the leaves of the trees come out above them, closing the canopy overhead. Wild garlic is in bud, and already bluebells are coming into flower, three weeks ahead of schedule.

Yet nothing can beat the amazing show of primroses, which blaze from grassy banks along lanes and hedges, making green hollows look as though they are spattered with delicious scrambled egg. In living memory, country people would make good money picking primroses by the thousand, tying them in little bunches and sending them to market in the towns. There is no evidence that such harvesting ever harmed the plants, but nowadays picking is strongly discouraged, and under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, it is an offence to uproot any wild plant without the landowner's permission.

DUFF HART-DAVIS

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# Straight up, without a twist

The martini has never had an unfashionable moment. But don't stir things up by drinking it out of the wrong glass. By Geoff Nicholson

**H**L Mencken said the martini was the only American invention as perfect as a sonnet. I suspect he may have had a martini or two inside him at the time, but I know what he meant. The martini is classic, formal, severe; it has strict rules; and it *has* to be served in the right glass. You know the one, the perfect cone on a long, straight stem. The martini glass.

A New York barman once said to me: "If it ain't in a martini glass, it ain't a martini." And I tend to agree, but this isn't literally true. It's reckoned the martini was invented in the last quarter of the 19th century, whereas the classical form of the glass only became firmly associated with the drink at the end of the 1920s. Until then, martini had often been drunk out of glasses with much rounder, fuller bowls. The conical form had certainly existed before that, and Lowell Edmunds, the world's prime martini scholar and author of *Martini Straight Up* (John Hopkins) describes a 16th-century Italian goblet from Murano that would fit into any modern cocktail bar.

But I think the martini only attained critical mass, only became an icon, when glass and drink were mated, a little like Coke and the Coke bottle, only about a million times more interesting and sophisticated. There are those who think the martini glass is a Bauhaus version of the champagne glass, but I think this may be over-inventive. That it owes something to Art Deco seems, however, undeniable.

Any sort of civilised drinking has its visual element. We want to see the colour and clarity of wine or whisky, but with a martini it's even more important because there's almost nothing

to see. It's sometimes called the silver bullet, but a martini isn't silver exactly, it's transparent, ethereal, pure shimmering liquid, and you need a glass that doesn't get in the way.

That's why you absolutely don't want a martini glass to have a coloured bowl, it hides the drink; and besides, somebody might think you're drinking something grisly with curacao or cranberry juice. I suppose a coloured stem is all right, and a simple gold line round the rim doesn't detract too much, but it doesn't add anything either. I have to confess I find myself rather amused by those glasses with zig-zag stems, but if you push

*You have to pick it up gently, carefully, treat it with respect. The martini is not to be taken lightly*

me I'll admit they're probably a bit too frivolous for the purist martini drinker.

The martini glass has become a symbol. You'll find it in international airports as a sign for the bar. You'll find it outlined in neon above some of the sleaziest drinking joints in America. Children's playgrounds in New York have signs showing a martini glass with a red line through it to indicate "no alcohol".

That symbolism has been taken up by the knowing, easy-listening, lounge-and-hotel-bar crowd, and you'll see the martini glass plastered all over current album covers and movie posters. It's synonymous with cool.

Geoff Nicholson's new novel, *Female Ruins*, is published by Gallanez (£9.99).



The martini: transparent, ethereal, pure shimmering liquid - synonymous with cool

## A PERFECT MARTINI? CERTAINLY...

**OPINIONS ON** how to mix the perfect martini vary widely, and discussions between purists can become heated enough to melt the ice in the coolest of cocktail shakers. Don't even mention vodka in certain circles. According to Michael Jackson's *Bar & Cocktail Book* (Mitchell Beazley, £9.99), the drink is made with "one whisper dry vermouth, one avalanche London Dry Gin, a touch of orange bitters (optional), and lemon zest. Stir the vermouth, gin and orange bitters in a mixing glass amid a mountain of ice-cubes, for a maximum of 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled

martini glass. Add the lemon zest. Ask any drinking guests whether decorations are to be worn." Intriguing bastardisations to offend martini mavens include the £7.25 Fresh Fruit Martini, served in London's Met Bar. The favourite variety, watermelon, is made by squeezing a piece of the fresh fruit into a cocktail shaker with a large shot of chilled vodka, two teaspoons of

sugar-syrup and just a dash of orange bitters, and shaking hard before straining into a chilled martini glass. Head bartender Guillaume would use nothing but the classic martini glass, such as the one pictured, made by Dartington Crystal (£19.95 from Harrods). For an exemplary cocktail shaker to turn an amateur mixologist into a suave, smooth-talking bar steward, try the Bulleit cocktail shaker.

And if you are plagued by friends who are simply too busy to enjoy one with you, you can always e-mail them a virtual drink by visiting the martini site at [www.modbooks.com](http://www.modbooks.com).

KATY GUEST

## DESIGN SHOWS

**Thinking Aloud:** curated by sculptor Richard Wentworth - the first thoughts of artists and designers, from Joseph Paxton's scribbles of the Crystal Palace to Walt Disney's drawing of Pluto. *Camden Art Centre*, Artwright Road, London NW3, 9 April to 30 May

**Wearable Art:** eight theatrical, cutting-edge jewellery and clothes makers. At *Contemporary Applied Arts*, 2 Percy Street, London W1 (0171-23441), 16 April to 29 May

**Modern Britain 1929-39:** Thirties design in Britain - lots of deliciously sleek interior and product design. *Design Museum*, Shoreditch, London SE1 (0171-403 9333), to 6 June

**Centenary exhibition of the Ruskin Pottery**, notable for experimental, gaudily-coloured glazes. *Geffrye Museum*, Kingsland Road, London E2 (0171-739 9893), 13 April to 27 June

**Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, furniture and art.** *Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum*, Kelvin Grove, (0141-287 2000) ends tomorrow

**The Earth is (not) Flat:** Knoll celebrates its 50th anniversary again

(celebrations were originally held last year) with an almost abstract furniture collection by Maya Lin.

**Mission**, 45 Hereford Road, London W2 (0171-792 4633), 21-29 April

**Mish-mash:** breaking the weaves - contemporary international basket-making. At *Whitworth Art Gallery*, Oxford Road, Manchester 16 April to 6 June and at the Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Road, London N1

17 June to 15 August

**Furniture and ceramics by followers of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.** *Millinery Works*, 85-87 Southgate Rd, London N1 (0171-359 2019), 13 April-2 May

**The Pleasures of Peace** The crafts in Britain from just after the war to the 1960s. *Sainsbury Centre*, Norwich, University of East Anglia, to 18 April (01603 531199)

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# A vast land out of the shadows

Libya's relations with the West are improving – and its spectacular scenery will soon be open to tourists again. But what is this extraordinary country really like? Tom Sheppard, one of the few Europeans to know the land and its people, reports

**O**ne of the smartest airline offices in the whole of Piccadilly used to be towards the western end, just by Green Park tube station. Last time I looked, the regulation plastic airliner was still there, uncomfortably pinned on its stand behind grubby windows – even though the office shut down nearly a decade ago. Now, though, Libyan Arab Airlines is getting airborne once more with the easing of UN sanctions (as a result of the handing over for trial of the two Libyans accused of the Lockerbie bombing) and is already getting calls from eager tourists.

If I were a Libyan, pondering (as they are) commissioned studies on how to enter the minefield of a tourist industry, I would be saying that stopping right here would be a good start. While they flick the pages of the reports and pass a magnifying glass over countries that have been "developed" for such things – not least their brash western neighbour Tunisia – the Libyans, with their sun, space, beaches and Roman ruins, have two provisional defences already in place: language and alcohol.

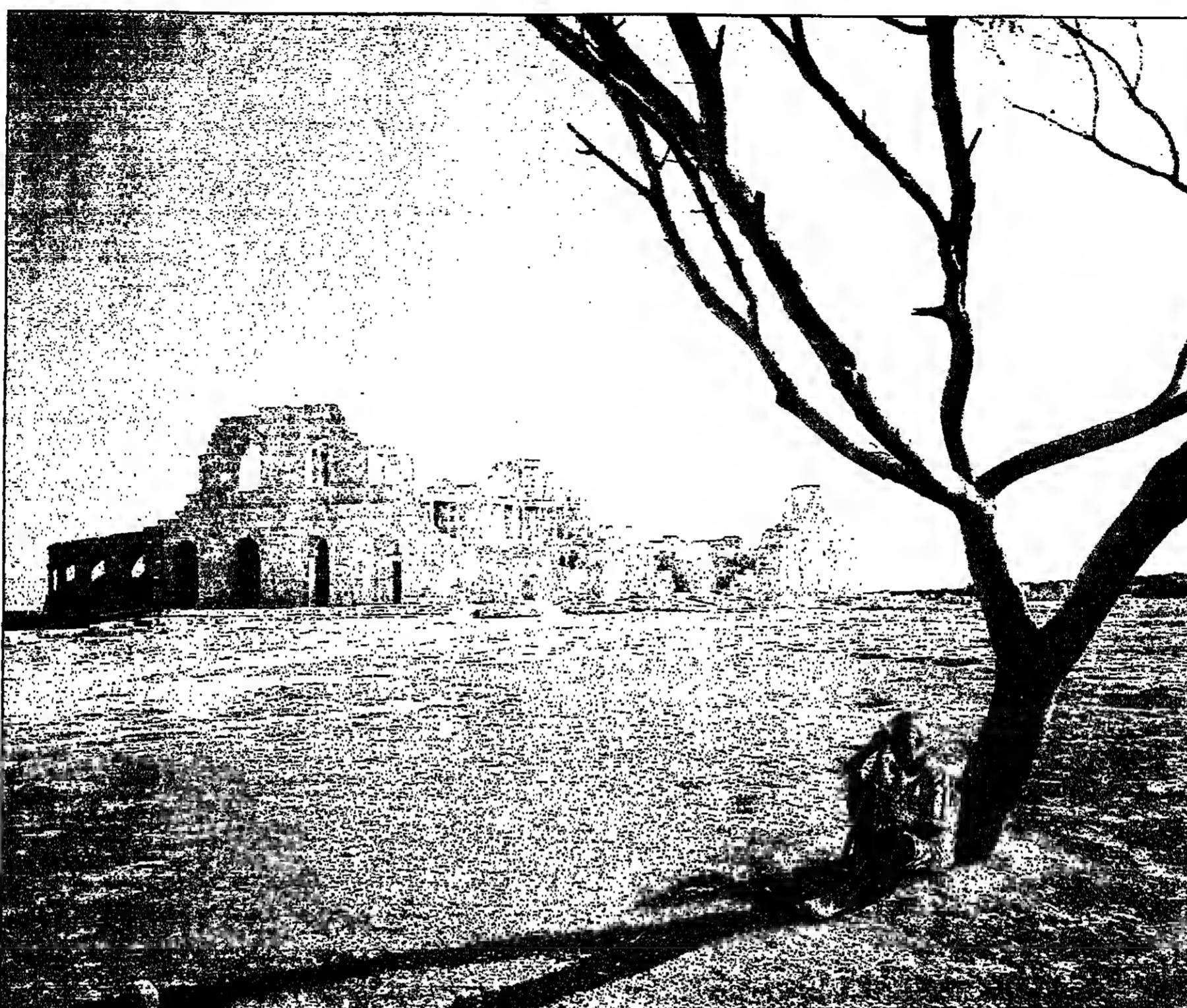
When the first beneficiaries of the relaxing of UN sanctions touch down in Tripoli, they will discover that transfers, passport control, customs, information bank, exit-taxis – all the notices and airport signage – are in Arabic. Only. And if you are flying out on one of the pioneering flights by re-invented Libyan Arab Airlines, don't expect anything stronger than coffee.

You need all your wits about you to make sense of the vastness of Libya. North to south it is Manchester to Madrid. West to east, Liverpool to Lithuania. Total population only five million – less than London. Most of it is desert with zones of spectacular scenery on a grand scale – which is to say you must travel long distances to see it, or to see it change.

Who goes there now? A very thin trickle of European visitors in four-wheel-drive vehicles – mostly German, French and Italian – venture down to the wildly rugged Acacus mountains in the south-west – as indeed can coach-borne groups with Tuareg guides and local Toyota. As in the Algeria of yore, there are polite, English-speaking Germans on Wagnerian motorcycles like the heroes of *Valhalla*. Quite how they survive in black leather in those temperatures I'll never know.

On a project that began five years ago (all the permissions took an age, but it was worth the wait to study rock art), I had a rare glimpse of all four corners of the country. Solo in a Land Rover, and dependent on their help for the fuel and water needed for the huge distances, I met a lot of people. Amazingly and humbly nice people.

Though shown confidently on every map, Tazerbo turned out to be



The loveliness of the ancient theatre at Sabratha and its vast desert setting is one reason to visit newly accessible Libya

Roger Wood/Corbis

more a concept than a place: a collection of tiny oases, well pumps and against-the-odds cultivation. Shaken (by the exposure and potential danger of breakdown) and stirred (by the beauty) after a 300-mile sand-dune traverse in which the track optimistically marked on the map simply was not there, I arrived at Tazerbo at high noon to find no main street or little row of lock-up shops. All the few shacks seemed to lack was a sinister Charles Bronson propping up a porch and an Ennio Morricone soundtrack.

The one-time fuel station was derelict. Unknown to me, however, the bush telegraph was working, and

before long Moussa Sulciman Mohammed appeared. Yes he knew someone who'd let me have diesel, and he himself could provide water.

This involved going to his house, being invited to lunch, meeting his wife and baby, emptying the yard hosepipe of near-boiling water heated in the sun and – because it turned out he was the tourism manager for Tazerbo and he considered looking after me to this extent to be his duty – later going to his "office" to make an entry in his visitors' book. If I would be so kind.

His friends did have diesel, drained on the spot from the auxiliary tank of a huge Mercedes truck.

They declined payment and, since my Arabic was as limited as their English, I was physically shown – past the post office mast, through the lanes and along the line of power cables – the start of the track I sought to my next destination.

Four hundred miles, a satellite rescue beacon misfire, arrest, questioning, cordial release and an award of considerable assistance later, I was at a distant frontier post on the Sudan border. The honk of the Land Rover yawned as I pondered a serious fuel consumption problem. All around gathered to assist. Among the makeshift huts and collection of odd vehicles,

incredibly wafted the smell of fresh-baked bread. I did what you would have done – an "Ah! Bistro!" inhalation of the smell, then returned to my work. Within minutes I was tapped on the shoulder and presented with two flats of Arab bread and a huge smile.

What was happening was nothing more than mutual respect – and that means mutual, not just one-way. In the Arab family there is respect for one's elders and betters and for visitors. If one is both a visitor and older, politeness and respect are automatic. Most of those on organised tours, tend towards the older end of the age spectrum.

Tour groups generally visit the northern littoral Roman and Greek ruins and the ancient settlement at Ghadames. Now flanked by a well-planned new town, Ghadames old city is almost entirely deserted except for one or two carefully restored dwellings. Yet it is an astonishing piece of functional design and climate-control architecture. Covered-over alleys and streets, with built-in benches to rest, and areas for children to play, lower temperatures in the summer. Massive construction stores warmth in the winter and wind-towers keep complex triple-storied houses cool and dust-free. Roof-top to roof-top access even gave the

## FACT FILE

**Getting there:** until Libyan Arab Airlines reopens its office, the main way into the country will be via Djerba, across the border to Tunisia. Tunis Air (0171-73 7644) flies weekly from Heathrow.

An organised tour is the easiest alternative. For example, British Museum Traveller (0171-223 1234) has a programme of tours costing about £2,000. For individual trips try Azar Tours, Jamal Abdulsader Street, Main Coastal Road, Zuara, Libya.

The procedure for obtaining a visa is complex. Azar Tours advises: "Before you hand in



your passport, make sure it has your passport information translated into Arabic and printed on your passport by a sworn translator or official department."

"People with an Israeli visa stamp on their passport will not be issued the visa in compliance with Libyan embargo against Israel."

**Money:** one Libyan dinar is worth \$2.20 at the official rate; the "open market" rate – a more accurate term than black market – is three Libyan dinars to one US dollar. By some ill-defined rules, large hotels demand payment in dollars.

**More information:** Azar Tours' website, [www.angelfire.com/az/azartours](http://www.angelfire.com/az/azartours)

# A refreshing drop of lemon aid

If Britain still feels cold, head to the summery citrus groves of Tunisia. By Nicola Kurtz



Hammamet's old walled town is an evocative place for a stroll

Nicola Kurtz

LEAVING THINGS to the last minute is not always a bad thing. I had one week to go until my holiday but nothing was packed, planned or even booked. I did have a list of what I wanted: it had to be warm and quiet but with the possibility of things to do, have good food and be within a reasonable flight time and budget.

Sitting in a busy central London travel agent on a grey Saturday afternoon, I was starting to feel that I was asking for the impossible. Holidays in the Caribbean suited all the criteria, except the budget. Holidays in the Canary Islands offered tourist metropolises with all-night discos and traditional English food – and a free bottle of sparkling wine for honeymoon couples – not the sort of week I was hoping for.

I was beginning to panic until the extremely patient travel agent suggested Tunisia – warmish, within budget and with a choice of four hotels in Hammamet. I chose the Sheraton, handed over my credit card and arranged to collect my tickets the following Saturday at Gatwick Airport.

One in three British holidaymakers who visit Tunisia chooses Hammamet. Anyone hoping for the English Patient experience should look elsewhere, south into the Sahara. Anyone just wanting a lazy holiday need look no further.

I'm not really a Sheraton sort of person, but I could get used to the idea. Scattered within the ample grounds that led down to the beach were the bedrooms: white, blue-shuttered buildings with balconies that look out onto neat gardens and palm and olive trees, or towards the sea, peace and space.

Sporty types can use the hotel's tennis courts and buses provide a shuttle to two nearby golf courses. I stuck to water sports – you could even get a glass of fresh orange juice, or a more dangerous tipple, in the swimming pool's bar.

The town itself is very tourist-driven, with stuffed toy camels available on each street corner and most of the stalls and shops between. The old walled town, the Medina, is more interesting, though avoiding the carpet sellers is more of a challenge than attempting to maintain a sense of direction among the labyrinth of narrow streets. You can walk into Hammamet from the hotel, either along the road or the beach. If both options sound like too much effort, the hotel provides a minibus for a two-hour visit each morning, and unless you

are a hardened trinket hunter, two hours will probably be more than enough.

Stretching away from the Medina along the sandy coast are 30 or more hotel complexes. But none of the hotels are higher than the tallest local tree, and the leafiness of the coastline keeps the tourist zone inconspicuous.

In spring the weather can be overcast and occasionally cool – ideal for visiting some of the sites around Tunisia. A visit to the Berber museum in Tunis, with its vast collection of Roman mosaics, is a must.

## DISCOVER THE ROUTE TO A PERFECT HOLIDAY

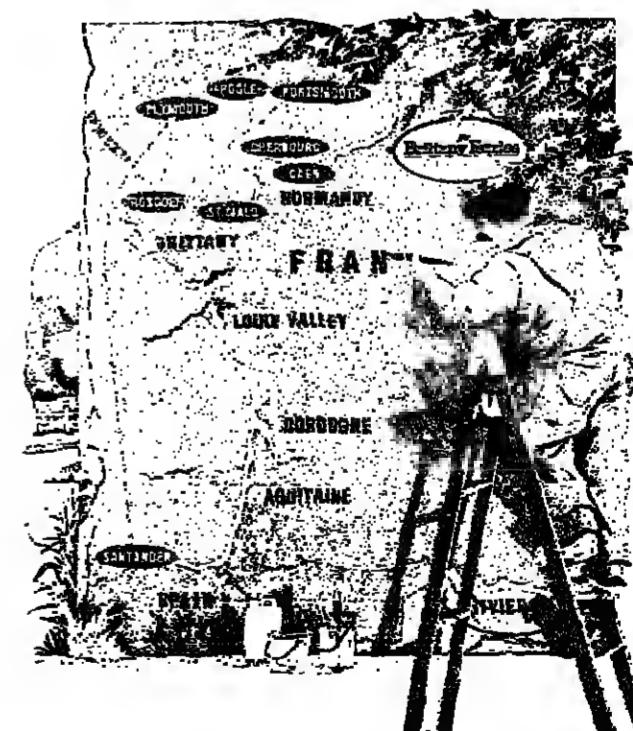
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# An island fit for heroes

A search for Patrick Leigh Fermor led Jane Garwood to the peaceful, scrub-covered hills of Hydra

**I**t was the half-serious, half-fanciful notion of meeting my favourite author which took me to Hydra, a Greek island in the Saronic Gulf. It was not otherwise a particularly appealing place; as someone practised in carefully avoiding tourist hot spots, it looked suspiciously accessible from Athens and the Peloponnese. Guide-books dismissed Hydra as expensive and touristy, and there were hints of the island once enjoying some fame as a film set for some B-movie featuring a scantily clad Sophia Loren. But a casual reference in a book I admire, plus a period of unexpected freedom from work, was enough to have me risking the hordes to search for my hero - the legendary adventurer, polymath and writer Patrick Leigh Fermor.

Ever since reading *A Time of Gifts*, Leigh Fermor's account of the first stage of a walk from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople, I have loved the idea of this man, and envied his pre-war travels in a Europe untouched by tourism. Best of all his books is *Mani*, encompassing his love of Greek people, culture and history while recounting a journey round a remote peninsula. It was written on Hydra in 1958. I knew Leigh Fermor still lived somewhere in Greece; perhaps Hydra was where I'd find him, sprightly and sipping a *cafe metric*, telling travellers' tales to a circle of admirers.

I took the hydrofoil from the port of Hermione on the Peloponnese. The water was so calm that the scrub-covered hills of the mainland were mirrored perfectly in the sea. Hydra was a 30-minute high-speed ride away - an hour and 20 minutes from Athens - in a Flying Dolphin

the Russian-built craft which buzzes everywhere around the Saronic Gulf like giant insects.

The first sight of my destination was a familiar one for any Greek island-hopper: a dense cluster of houses in a cleft between water and hills. Then, a mosaic of light and colour as sunlight bounced off the sea windows, chrome bits of boat. The houses were large with splashes of red geranium, ochre walls and terracotta roof tiles giving the town an Italian air. This was not typical of a Greek island, nor was the quiet ... no background hum of scooters, no enthusiastic tooting of car horns, just the shouts and gestures from fishermen and boatmen in the busy harbour. A line of donkeys waited patiently by the quayside, the only way of getting about on the island if you have no boat and don't like walking.

Walking was a pleasure here though. Each street was a precipitous stone staircase, slippery from centuries of use, and I went up until the harbour looked like the stage of an amphitheatre. Colourful canoes jostled yachts and cruisers, and Pan the anchorman, with a seaman's beard and belly, directed

scenes of near misses and tangled anchors from his little red boat.

Finding a place to stay wasn't easy, but the little pension Elena, well up the hillside, was clean and cheap and I later found it was cool to be *epano* - up above - not just for the views but also because of the day-tripper phenomenon. The island did get swamped with tourists because of its proximity to Athens, but they were usually too daunted by the steep steps to venture far from the harbour. The upper world was peaceful, all thick cypress doors and bright painted flowerpots, the only sound that of donkey boos on stone echoing off high walls. While you lounged on a secluded terrace during siesta time, a blast on the cruise ship's horn would signal the day-trippers' departure, and Hydra

would be returned to its residents. The object of my visit was a good opening gambit in conversations with strangers, and more than once I was invited to close my copy of *Mani* and join their taverna table. It soon got round that I was looking for the writer: just as soon it became quite obvious that he had left long ago. But by then I had fallen into a pleasurable routine of taking coffee on the quayside, reading, walking, swimming off the rocks and eating with my new friends. When someone asked a week later, "have you found him?" I had to remind myself who I was supposed to be looking for.

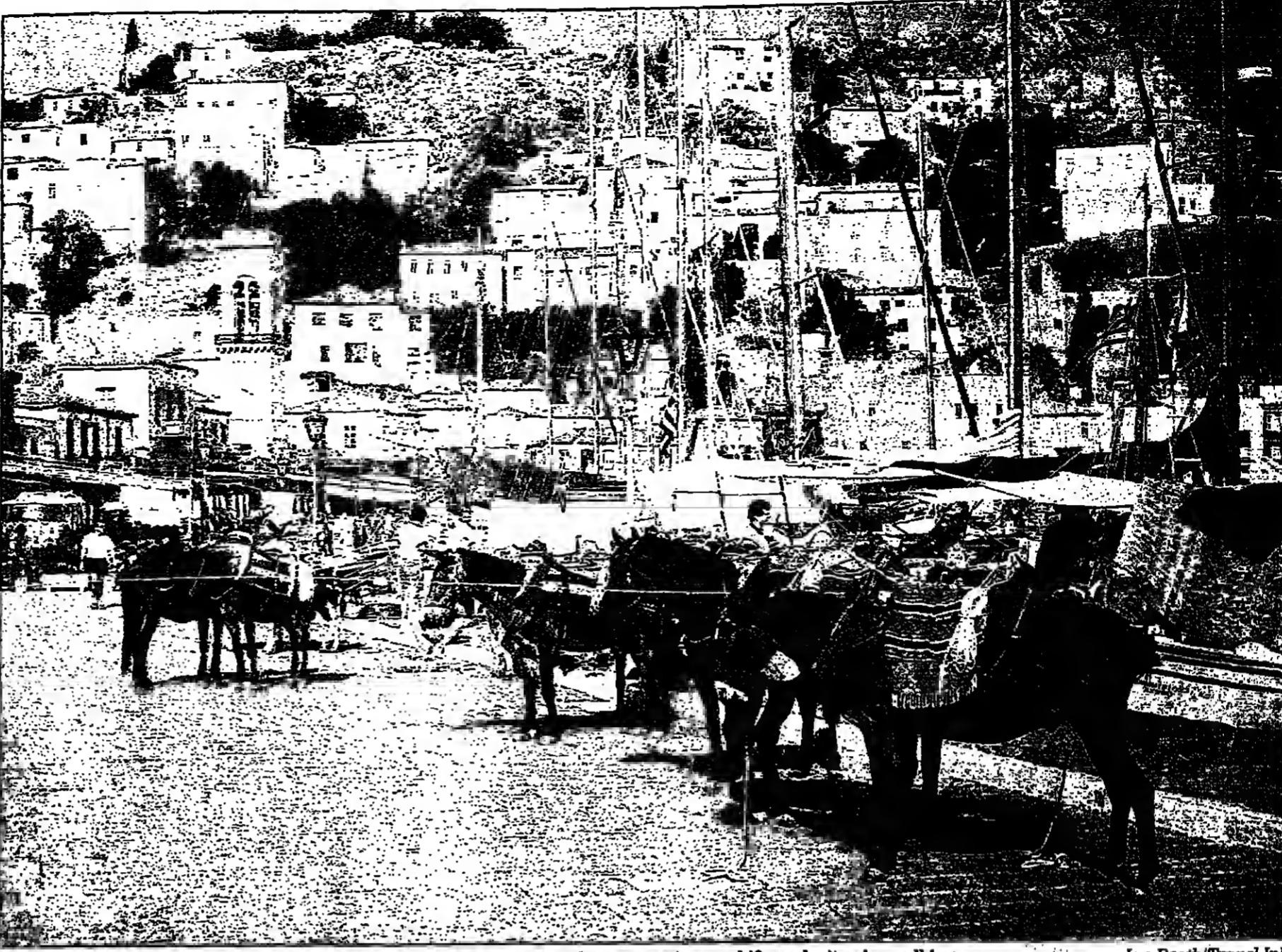
Conscious that I still should pay homage in some respect, I sought out the house where *Mani* was written. It turned out to be the ancestral home of Nikos Hadjikyriakou Ghika, perhaps Greece's best-known artist, and was situated on an expanse of hillside outside the town by the hamlet of Khaminia. Since Ghika, many artists have tried to paint Hydra's luminous skies, skull-like hills and distinctive architecture; he captured the cubist jumble of the town with a sunburst palette of ochres, greys and browns. The house where he entertained Kazantzakis, author of *Zorba the Greek*, the poet Seferis and philhellene Henry Miller - as well as Leigh Fermor - was destroyed in a mysterious fire 20 years ago, leaving a spectacular and evocative ruin where the locals now corral their donkeys.

Ghika's ancestors were among the merchant families who inhabited Hydra in its heyday; the impressive

stone mansions looming out of the curve of buildings around the harbour are a reminder of that time. These *archondika* were the work of Venetian and Genoese craftsmen, commissioned in the 18th century by fleet commanders eager to build monuments to their success. Hydriot sailors were legendary and their ships went anywhere - including through the English blockade of Europe during the Napoleonic wars to take grain to the French. Now, the house of Tsamadhos dominating the left side of the harbour is the merchant marine school, and the house of Tombazis on the right is an offshoot of the Athens School of Fine Art.

Hydra, then, is an appealing place: a mix of simplicity and sophistication where you can buy a

fur coat by the harbour or watch fishermen mend their nets. Characterful houses have become weekend hideaways for rich Athenians craving the simple life. On Friday nights they fling open shutters, light up high beamed ceilings and fill the quiet backstreets with music and voices. After three weeks of a blissfully fruitless search, it was at least easy for me to imagine why Patrick Leigh Fermor had chosen Hydra as the place to write his travel masterpiece. A beautiful house with a view, the shadows of an exciting past behind a picturesque present. Perhaps he, too, had found convivial company if he didn't. One day, when I actually find him, I'll thank him for showing me Hydra. It'll be a good excuse for another trip.



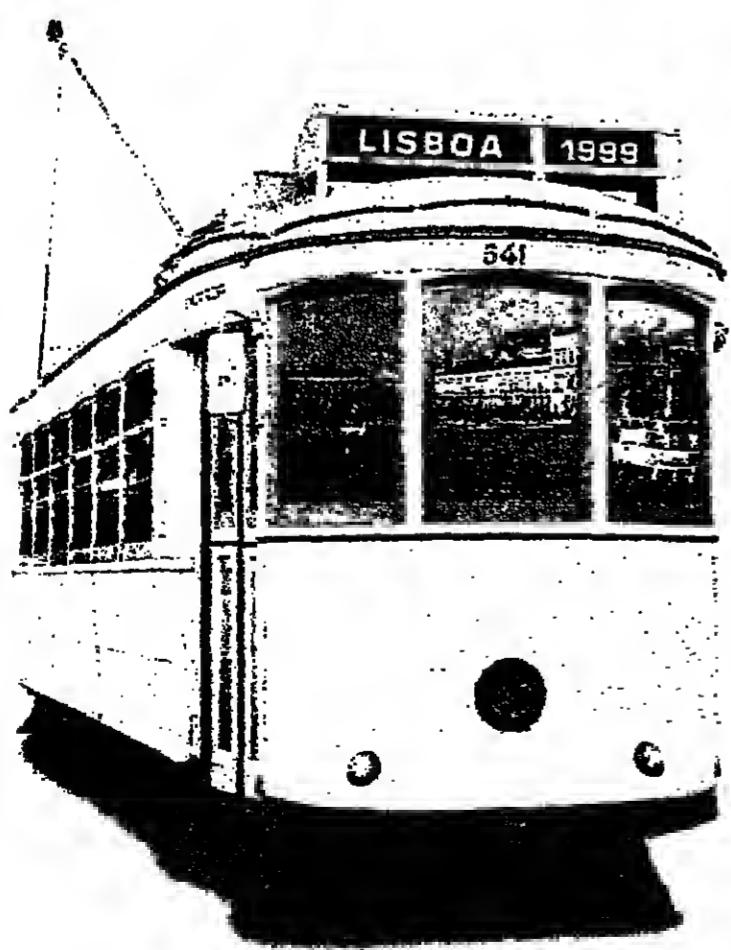
The line of donkeys waiting patiently by Hydra harbour provides the only way to get around if you don't enjoy walking

Ian Booth/Travel Ink

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## Trip the light fantastic

Orthodox Easter in Athens is a sight worth seeing. By Jill Dudley

"MEN OF Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious." So said St Paul nearly 2,000 years ago and, in part, he was right. To spend an Orthodox Easter weekend in Athens is to be reminded that not all Athenians worship the car or the god of Ouzo. For many the spirit of the Greek Orthodox Church still exerts a powerful influence.

Athens is at its best at Easter. The weather is warm, the sky is less polluted, the tourists are few and many of the Athenians leave the city for the islands or villages. The museums and archaeological sites remain open (except on Easter Sunday when a trip to the nearby Hymettos mountains means a day among the wild flowers).

Throughout the Easter weekend the churches are full of these "very religious" people. The services last several hours and the faithful come and go as it suits. The interiors of the domed Byzantine churches are beautiful with their candles of supplication, glistening mosaics, frescoes and icons, and ornate brass chandeliers.

The 12th-century church of Agia Aikaterini, for example, within easy reach of the Acropolis, stands in its own sunken courtyard with two ancient columns. In St Paul's day the annual torchlight procession would have been in October along the Sacred Way to Eleusis. The occasion would have been the Greater Mysteries held in the sanctuary of Demeter, goddess of corn. Then the people mourned the descent of Demeter's daughter to the underworld and looked forward to her return in the spring.

Or there was the annual procession along the Sacred Way at the midsummer Panathenaic festival in honour of Athene, the great goddess and patroness of the city. This wound its way up to the



Dressing for the occasion in Athens RHPL

Parthenon, the temple of Athene, which still stands supreme on the Acropolis.

The climax of the Easter weekend is the Resurrection service held late on Saturday night. As midnight approaches there is a feeling of mounting expectation and the lights in the church of Agia Aikaterini, as in all the churches of Greece, are extinguished except for the small icon candles suspended before the iconostasis (the sanctuary screen) whose central "Royal Doors" are closed.

At midnight, the Royal Doors are opened and the figure of the priest is dimly seen before the darkened sanctuary, holding a lighted candle to represent the new "light of the world". As he pronounces the words *Christos anesti* (Christ is risen), the church bells peal and fireworks and thunderbolts are let off. The faithful in the church surge forward to light their candles.

The whole of Athens becomes one great celebration as each citizen guards his "new light" and carries his candle home with him - if it stays alight, it is seen as good luck in the year ahead. Meanwhile, on the Acropolis the Parthenon is once again floodlit a gold-white and stands supreme against the night sky.

## FACT FILE

YOU CAN fly to Athens from Heathrow or Gatwick on British Airways (0845 222111) and Virgin Atlantic (01293 747747); from Heathrow on Cronus Air (0171 580 3500) and Olympic Airways (0171 409 3400); and from Luton on

easyJet (0870 6 000 000). The lowest return fare is on easyJet, costing £121.90.

From airports outside London, the best prospect for a non-stop flight is to use a charter. Full summer services begin on 1 May.

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# Cross-canal hopping

Brussels has a secret. Alongside its canal, galleries, clubs, bars and restaurants are sprouting up. By Clare Thomson

**P**anic grips people who move to Brussels: they can't find any water, bar the torrents that fall from the sky and the spirit produced by Manneken Pis, the statue of a little boy peeing.

Adding insult to injury, the city's only river, a miserable trickle known as the Senne, was buried in 1886 because of cholera outbreaks and is only visible in a few hidden corners of the city.

But in the poorer districts to the west, where the well-heeled fear to tread, lies one of the oldest canals in Europe. Duchess Marie of Burgundy gave consent for a waterway in 1477, but it took an Emperor, Charles V, to get the project off the ground.

The Willebroek Canal, which was based on designs by Leonardo da Vinci, was started in 1550 - not a moment too soon for the disgruntled city burghers. Weary of the Senne, which frequently overflowed or dried up, merchants who relied on the river were exasperated by the need to pay taxes to Mechelen, north of Brussels, through which the river flowed.

When the canal was opened in 1561, festivities went on without interruption for three wild days. Some people called it the eighth wonder of the world, and the public transport connection with Antwerp, introduced in 1565, lasted for 250 years until the coming of the railway.

In the 1830s, the combination of the railway - one of the first to be constructed on the continent - and the new Canal de Charleroi, which extended the waterway south into Wallonia, created an urban revolution in western Brussels. Workers from outside the capital flocked to the

fLOURISHING industries of the "Manchester neighbourhood", which centred on the commune of Molenbeek.

The working-class, immigrant area has always been a melting pot. Locals bear the playful nickname "Zinneke", an epithet drawn from an anti-flooding channel of the Senne and meaning "mongrel".

The mongrels of Molenbeek may have disgusted respectable society ("The rich never like getting their feet wet," shrugs one disdainful native), but the wealthy were not blind to the importance of the city's rat-infested waterways. They simply didn't want to admit they were there.

So the well-off settled on the higher ground in eastern Brussels (now home to the EU's institutions) and enjoyed their elegant boulevards and flourishing parks, leaving the problem to the waterways. They didn't have to pass through Molenbeek on his way to the Royal Palace in Laeken.

Today, all that's left of the hope and dynamism that once characterised western Brussels is the odd street name - Rue du Prospective or Rue de l'Avenir - and some decaying social housing projects from the turn of the century. The only signs of commerce on the run-down Rues Birmingham and Liverpool are a couple of Arabic bakers and small repair shops.

Or so it seems at first glance. In fact, the neighbourhood is enjoying something of a renaissance as its buildings are reclaimed for cultural use.

A red-brick sugar refinery on Rue Manchester is set to reopen as a contemporary arts and dance centre; within the warehouses of Boulevard Barthélémy is a cluster of 15 art galleries; and Quai de

Mariemont is home to the Fool Moon, the city's finest jazz, funk and hip-hop venue.

The authorities are, at last, getting more involved. Thanks to new political will and a more dynamic port authority, the port of Brussels - third-biggest in the country after Antwerp and Zeebrugge - is thriving. Determined to extend its international contacts, it recently agreed to twin with the Tunisian port of Sfax.

There's even a celebration of the canal on 8 May, with boat tours, firework displays, water sports demonstrations and free bike hire.

"But it's still hard to get people to go west," moans Guido Vanderhulst of crusading social history group La Fonderie, which has been organising boat tours along the canals of Brussels since 1989.

"No one associates Brussels with water." To prod tourists and residents into action, the Brussels authorities have constructed a new promenade area scattered with bars and restaurants, at the boats' departure point on the Bassin Beco, opposite the Quai des Péniches. If you take a tour, you get to see the proud but dishevelled remnants of old industries - breweries, mills, foundry towers and warehouses - alongside somewhat more modern enterprises, such as oil refineries.

Heading north to Laeken, the small pavilion on the left bank is the Royal Station, built for the exclusive use of Leopold II and used only five or six times.

In sharp contrast to this monarchic extravagance, the opposite bank is home to the remains of a pioneering 19th-century co-operative steelworks, created by a socialist blacksmith during exile from France. The central building housed 72 families, a dining

hall, laundry, school and even a medical centre. Further south, the Petit Château, now a temporary refuge for asylum-seekers, used to be the headquarters of the civil guard, who kept watch over social unrest in the industrial area.

The uncontested highlight of the tour, however, is the former customs house, Tour & Taxis, a massive brick and wrought-iron structure through which goods were transferred to the rail network.

Despite vociferous protests from heritage activists, it faces the ignominious prospect of becoming an American-style rock stadium - a typical fate in a city that has always sacrificed the past for short-term gain.

If the boat trip fails to satisfy your curiosity, other Fonderie tours include a stroll around the Quai de Bruges, near Place Sainte-Catherine. The slightly forlorn pool in the middle is all that's left of the old port which, along with several docks, was filled in after a cholera outbreak.

There is nothing left of the magnificent glass-and-steel-covered fish market either, though the seafood restaurants that fringe the former quay provide some consolation. Heading west to the canal, there are umpteen examples of early 20th-century housing projects, with elegant apartments over ground-floor shopfronts.

If you don't mind being stared at by locals, the best way to wind up your watery trip is with a beer in Au Laboureur, a down-at-heels pub on the edge of touristy Brussels. Or, if you're feeling particularly indulgent, splash out on a meal at Le Cheval Marin ('The Sea Horse'), a restaurant in baroque surroundings that has watched the rise and demise of Brussels' inner-city port since the 17th century.

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Lake Ypacaraí, Paraguay's version of the Essex Riviera resort of Leigh-on-Sea, can be reached from the capital, Asunción, by steam locomotive. The fare is 60p return

Rob Cousins/Robert Harding Picture Library

# The lost heart of South America

Paraguay is probably the most distinctive, eccentric and lovable country in Latin America. By Hugh O'Shaughnessy

**T**he trouble with Paraguay is that we're an island surrounded by land. Thus does my friend Julio César describe the fate of a country in the centre of one of the world's biggest land masses but which is the most isolated, idiosyncratic and indeed enjoyable of all the countries of the Western Hemisphere for a foreigner to visit. Isolation and otherness are in the Paraguayan blood.

Some Latin American countries are so similar that you could be forgiven for not remembering which one you were in. In Paraguay you could never think you were anywhere else.

To keep the Paraguayans from foreign entanglements 150 years ago, the dictator Francia forbade anyone to leave or enter the country. Foreigners who got here had to stay. But thank God Paraguayans are a little behind the times; it makes them kind, friendly and welcoming as no others.

Not much has changed here since Henry Pilling, the retired bank manager from south London and hero of Graham Greene's novel *Travels with My Aunt*, arrived a decade or two ago. Greene addicts will remember he settled here, married the police chief's teenage daughter and devoted his declining

years to a life of gentle smuggling. Today, as in Pilling's time, the hot winter sun beats down and even when the tropical heavens open, the rain falls as warm water and does nothing to bring the temperature below 95°.

General Alfredo Stroessner, the man who ruled the country with a cheque book in one hand and a wooden club with projecting nails in the other, has been in exile in Brazil for a decade now but his cronies, quarrelling among themselves, still rule.

The only difference today is that you don't necessarily go to prison for scrawling anti-Stroessner slogans on the walls. The usual summer torpor is more marked this year with the economic and political scene in a slump. Greene would certainly recognise it. There was some political turbulence in the streets last month - the vice-president was shot dead, apparently at the behest of the president, but he has fled, the affair is over and there is no reason to call off a visit. The capital, Asunción, is a good deal safer than many cities in neighbouring Brazil.

And there is a lot beneath the apparent tropical torpor. This is the only country on the continent of America where under Spanish colonialism the indigenous people, the Guarani, maintained themselves.

There is certainly a thick layer of declamatory Spanish civilisation

which embraces a long line of generals and dictators, not just Stroessner but Martínez, Estigarribia, López, Francia and dozens more. Modern Western ghastliness has arrived in the form of Burger King, one or two shopping arcades, Citibank and parking meters.

But Paraguay remains something other, a country which despite its drawbacks is nicer to visit than any of its neighbours.

Perhaps it's the Indian influence: the Guarani language is widely spoken and written. Indeed, perhaps half the population speaks no Spanish. The pace of life is quiet; in the countryside there is a closeness to nature which springs from the fact that the Guarani were, and still are in some places, nomadic people, hunters and gatherers. "There is a Paraguayan philosophy," I tell my students to think hard about it," says

Beno Glaiser, who teaches philosophy at the university. Transport, or the lack of it, provides big clues to the Paraguayan soul.

For some months now Asunción hasn't been what it was. They've taken away the ancient tramcars which clattered up and down the hills of the capital for years after their retirement from Brussels (I always used to wonder what Paraguayans made of the notices inside them in

Flemish and French which prohibited splitting.) Anyway they're gone, replaced by old buses.

But enthusiasts for antique modes of transport need not despair. Every Saturday and Sunday morning at the 19th-century station, even more ancient locomotives are steamed up with wood fire in their bellies and sent down the track for an hour or two with one battered carriage full of happy Paraguayans to Lake Ypacaraí, the country's counterpart to the Essex Riviera resort of Leigh-on-Sea.

There is not much international passenger traffic on the river these days but the river is still the main highway to many places up country.

Tied up beside the quay was the good ship *Guarani*, which has brought its cargo of river fish, a battered car, tons of slaked lime and passengers down from Vallemi, two days to the north. After the stevedores precariously manoeuvred the car from off the hold they set to bringing the lime out from the bold.

Meanwhile enormous fish of species unknown elsewhere were hauled out from the fo'c'sle to the delight of the captain's waiting fishwives.

I must take that boat up to Vallemi one of these days. I'm sure there would be someone aboard who, to pass the time, would teach me the first elements of the Guarani language as we chug up the great Paraguay River into the unknown heart of South America.



## FACT FILE



### Getting there

There are no direct flights from the UK to Paraguay. Here are some alternatives. Journey Latin America (0181-747 3108) has a fare of £635 to Asunción via Madrid on Iberia. Or fly to the Iguazu Falls at the east of Paraguay: Argentina and Brazil have airports close to the Paraguayan border. South American Experience (0171-976 5511) offers a fare of £462 to Buenos Aires on Aerolineas Argentinas (via Madrid), with a £192 return to Iguazu.

### Getting around

You can build a trip to Paraguay

into the new improved Mercosur Air Pass which gives you laughably cheap transport around Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, eg from Bahia, home of Afro-Brazilian culture to Cape Horn. The pass is issued with a transatlantic ticket for travel on most airlines from these countries and in different prices and distances. For instance, the 4,200km pass costs you just £250.

### Accommodation

Highly recommended is the ancient but spacious, comfortable and friendly Gran Hotel del Paraguay at de la Residencia 902 (00 595 12 200051).

# When a rest is as good as a climb

If your idea of a hike is a stroll across Hampstead Heath, the thought of climbing Aconcagua – the highest mountain in the world outside Asia – will make you need to lie down. By Justin Rowlatt

IT WAS the most dangerous section of the mountain. The wind was picking up and we had to negotiate an ice-covered path 2km above the valley floor. The problem was I couldn't seem to trust my legs anymore. I had just climbed to the top of Aconcagua – at almost 7,000m, the highest mountain in the world outside Asia – and I was suffering from the altitude. It wasn't that I'd lost all co-ordination, but I was walking as though I was more than a little tipsy.

Until now, my idea of a hike had been a Sunday afternoon stroll on Hampstead Heath. That's until a mountain-minded friend persuaded me that it was time I attempted something "a little more ambitious".

I began to regret my decision on my very first day in Argentina when, sitting in an elegant Buenos Aires café, enjoying a *café chico* and the chatter of Argentine high society. I read that a Czech hiker had died on Aconcagua of altitude sickness.

Two more bodies were brought down the mountain on mules the day before we began the hike. A ferocious storm had struck the highest camp on the mountain, tearing tents apart. Two walkers had been caught unawares and died of hypothermia. Their deaths brought the year's total to five fatalities. Yet 1999 has apparently been a good year.

I'd been warned that there was, on average, one death in 300 climbers on Aconcagua. Compared with other mountains, that's not too dangerous but I was horrified – horrified that I had let myself in for such a perilous enterprise, and appalled by the senseless death of



The Andes as seen from Aconcagua Pictures Colour Library

these people. At the same time, though, I'll admit that part of me was excited by this proximity to danger. The real surprise was just how unexciting most of the hiking up Aconcagua was. This is no soaring cathedral of a mountain but rather a great mass of dark rock circled by sweeping scree slopes. There is a certain magnificence in its bulk, but the attraction is its height and the ease of access. Most of the deaths are down to inexperienced

accompained by a pounding headache and I felt as if my brain was swelling in my skull, which it probably was.

There's no sure way of avoiding the effects of altitude, but it can be minimised with proper acclimatisation. The climbers' mantra – climb high, sleep low – might be better rephrased as walk a little bit then rest a lot. We had three whole days resting and some days we walked for as little as three hours ... and then rested some more.

I like to rest. The problem is there's not a great deal to do on the lateral moraine of a glacier. There are no plants or animals, just rock and ice and, although the views are stunning, they don't change. I could trace most of the route up the mountain from my tent and, until summit day, wherever we camped we got slight variations of the same view.

Fellow climbers provided an amusing diversion but, compared with typical Aconcagua Man (it's mainly males who climb it), my weekend rambles don't make for good yarns and I was soon ready for a break from all the resting.

Walking at altitude is much like walking elsewhere but it takes much longer and hurts more. We snaked up the mountain like a great long millipede and there was a pleasant hypnotic quality in the steady monotony. I was lucky; I didn't suffer much from the altitude and, weatherwise, we had warm sunny days and, by the standards of Aconcagua, little wind. If you aren't lucky, it can be hell on earth. Winds of 130km per hour are not unusual, and the

temperature in summer can fall to -20°C, giving a wind chill that doesn't bear thinking about.

Summit day arrived and we set out for the top at 3.30am on a freezing morning. By the time dawn broke we were way above the clouds, above everything. At one point we could see the shadow cast by Aconcagua across what seemed like the entire Andes. As if to compensate for these great views, the hiking got very tough. At these altitudes your muscles get 20-30 per cent of sea-level oxygen and it's very tiring, like a 12-hour marathon but stopping to pant after every step.

Suddenly, though, we were there. For 10 minutes we were on top of the highest of the high Andes with the world stretching away below us. Then the clouds swirled in and we could have been on an icy slab of rock almost anywhere.

Now all we had to do was walk back down. That's when my legs went. The guide tied a rope around my chest and led me down the difficult bit like a dog on a lead. A trifle humiliating, perhaps, but nothing that couldn't be cured by a jolly good rest.

Walking at altitude is much like walking elsewhere but it takes much longer and hurts more. We snaked up the mountain like a great long millipede and there was a pleasant hypnotic quality in the steady monotony. I was lucky; I didn't suffer much from the altitude and, weatherwise, we had warm sunny days and, by the standards of Aconcagua, little wind. If you aren't lucky, it can be hell on earth. Winds of 130km per hour are not unusual, and the

## THEATRICALS AND THIEVES IN BOGOTÁ

PLENTY OF people get robbed in Bogotá, and with one killing every hour, the Colombian capital is possibly the most murderous city in the world. So it is all the stranger, and oddly terrifying, that some villains indulge in theatrical robbery.

I had come from village life in Tingo, so on the afternoon of the robbery I am in the wrong frame of mind for a large South American city. I enter a bank and ask if I can change a traveller's cheque. The answer is no, but a man in a suit, who is reading a paper in the bank's foyer, says he knows where I can. "Man A" is middle-aged, rich-looking and friendly. He takes me to an Imex exchange bureau. I change the money while he waits.

As we leave, I am becoming suspicious. A couple of minutes later a man crosses in front of us and drops a large wad of pesos. This is "Man B". Man A picks it up. I think he is going to steal it so I approach Man B and tell him Man A has his money. He waves me away and walks in another direction. Man A now takes me into a cafe. I am befuddled, but think "how typical – he wants a free meal for helping me." We sit down and ask for two drinks. I ask Man A his profession and he shows me his business card: furniture supplier. I believe him.

Man B comes in sweating and looking worried. He is wearing a suit and tie. He produces a small money bag with a zip and says his money fell out of it, and asks for it back. He shows an identity card for a public transport company and says it is their money. He asks Man A to show him his ("Man A's") money. Man A produces a huge wad of pesos. It must have been more than \$1,000 worth. Man B shouts at Man A: "There is more!" Man A then produces the wad dropped in the street, and hands it to Man B.

I begin to feel I have stumbled into a Gabriel García Márquez story. Man B says: "I dropped more money!" Man A denies he has it, which I know is true since he has handed over all the money Man B dropped. Then Man B asks me to produce my money. I refuse. A policeman walks in and sits three tables away. The cafe is full. Man A and Man B become more heated. I am nervous. I think: "I'll show Man B the money I got from Imex and the exchange receipt, and that will settle things."

I take out the receipt and my money and count it out in front of him. Man B grabs it from across the table. I shout: "No!" Man B examines the wad and agrees that it is not his money. He appears to put my money in his money bag and hands it back. Man A and Man B get up and rush out.

At this moment I find that the bag does not open (the zip has been tampered with) and I realise I have been robbed. After 30 seconds I manage to open the bag and find a wad of worthless paper. The tourist police call Man A "El Contro", and say they cannot find him or his accomplice.

ANDREW JAMES



# Voice Personals®

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women  
seeking  
men

**GREGARIOUS FEMALE**,  
age 35+, blonde, slim, SW.  
London, professional, enjoys  
cooking, staying in, tennis,  
holidays, weekends away,  
seeks male, 30-40, tall, pro-  
fessional, intelligent, to make  
her laugh. 29159

**THE SAME OLD SCENE**,  
Engaging, warm, vibrant,  
friendly female, late 30s,  
quality and deep into person-  
ality, seeking mate, in camara,  
seeks male, 20s, 30s, for  
friendship/relationship.  
London area. 29160

**QUIRKY HUMOUR?**  
Vegetarian? Questioning?  
Keen to travel? What would  
you like to meet similar in  
tall, slimness, grounded, very  
young, 40-something female? In East Sussex area  
please. 29161

**VEGETARIAN VACANCY**

Best friend wanted for happy  
outgoing, professional lady,  
50s, into spiritual growth, the-  
atre, films, gardening, good  
company, would suit intelli-  
gent, sensitive, vegetarian  
male. Opportunities for prom-  
otion. Suffolk. 29162

**ADVENTUROUS FEMALE**  
Intelligent, good-looking  
female, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s,  
54+, likes horse riding, trav-  
elling, music, pubs, cinema,  
seeks male, similar age, 35+  
and above, friendly, thun-  
derous, good humoured,  
kind, considerate, attention  
seeker. 29163

**LIVE LIFE TO THE MAX**  
Fun-loving, slightly mad,  
intelligent, down-to-earth  
female, 35, 39, blonde/  
green, enjoys shopping,  
travel, seeks male, 35-40,  
50+, with similar interests,  
for friendship at first. 29165

**CHRISTIAN LADY**

Single, 33, N/S, medium  
build, 5'5", brown hair, blue  
eyes, loves animals, wildlife, coun-  
tryside/countryside, seeks Christian  
gent, 30-45, friendship, lead-  
ing to romance. 29166

**RIGHT OPTIMIST**

Cheerful, friendly, enthu-  
siastic, blue-eyed, fair-skinned  
female, 33, into fun, friends,  
writing, adventurous travel,  
the arts, seeks like-minded  
male, 30-40, London based.  
29167

**ATTRACTIVE SLIM**

Brown-eyed female, 40,  
many arts-based interests,  
seeks handsome male, 35-  
45, with GSOH, friend-  
ship, travel, writing. 29168

**DOES SIZE**

**REALLY MATTER?**  
Attractive, generously pro-  
portioned woman, 40s, with  
a generous heart to match,  
seeks like-minded, atten-  
dant, mate, for companionship,  
relationship. 29169

**HOLDING OUT FOR LOVE**

Slim, golden-skinned  
female, 30s, 40s, 50s,  
Asian, into life's adventures,  
still clinging persistently to  
notion, 30-35, need to settle for  
less than love, needs ball,  
happy, confident, witty, inde-  
pendent, seeks mate, to prove her right. 29170

**CELTIC DREAMING**

Fair-skinned, blue-eyed red-  
head, 30, medium height,  
curvaceous, into arts, music,  
literature, yoga, laughter,  
reading, writing, dancing, swim-  
ming, walking, horse riding.  
29171

**BELLE IN BELFAST**

Intelligent, slim, attractive  
woman, 28, into cinema,  
arts, travel, keep-fit, seeks  
handsome male, for friend-  
ship, mate, for romance. 29172

**BROWN-EYED GIRL**

Sensational, black single  
mum, student, 57+, enjoys  
fashion shows, dancing, cin-  
ema, art, music, gardening, DIY,  
cooking, tennis, swimming,  
walking, horse riding. 29173

**BEWITCHING WOMAN**

With style and a wicked  
smile, seeks warm, witty,  
wise, renaissance man, 40-  
50, experienced, good look-  
ing, good humour, and smiling  
women who stay their own  
dragons. Middlesex, based.  
29174

**SEEKING SOMETHING SPECIAL**

Canno, genuine, loving lady,  
59, 4'11", GSOH, N/S, medi-  
um build, enjoys life, dancing,  
swimming, walking, swim-  
ming, tennis, golf, tennis, swim-  
ming, walks, horse rid-  
ing. 29175

**VET**

Or at least animal-loving,  
professional male, sought by  
Plymouth-based, intelligent,  
good-looking, friendly, 30-40,  
keen to travel, fun, literature,  
swimming, walks, horse rid-  
ing. 29176

**PLEASE REPLY**

Or at least animal-loving,  
professional male, sought by  
Plymouth-based, intelligent,  
good-looking, friendly, 30-40,  
keen to travel, fun, literature,  
swimming, walks, horse rid-  
ing. 29177

**ONE MAN AND HIS DOG**

Man with dog sought by  
recently bereaved Labrador  
owner, 45+, N/S, with good  
brain and looks. London/  
Hampshire. 29178

**IDEAS TURN ME ON**

Sly, incurably romantic  
teacher, 30s, seeks tactile,  
sensual lady, for long-term  
romantic relationship. Any area.  
29179

**SURRY BASED**

Joy, joyful, young woman  
with dark hair, 51, looks younger,  
seeks male companion, for  
conversation, films, theatre,  
art, music, gardening, DIY,  
cooking, tennis, swimming,  
walking, horse riding. 29180

**NOTWITHSTANDING QUALITIES?**

Unconventional Continental  
brunette, late 40s, tall, slim,  
N/S, intellectuals inter-  
est, enjoys outdoors, spontaneity,  
professional male, 45+,  
emotionally literate, lively,  
mind, similar interests.

Bucks/On Line. 29181

**IDEAS TURN ME ON**

Sly, incurably romantic  
teacher, 30s, seeks tactile,  
sensual lady, for long-term  
romantic relationship. Any area.  
29182

**COULD YOU GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE?**

We are a young professional couple longing for a  
child. The only way that we can have a baby is  
through egg donation.

If you are a woman under 36 and would like to  
use our service, please call nurse Jane on 0171 234 0707  
quoting reference number 11046.

All reasonable expenses covered. Thank you.

DELICIOUS BRUNETTE...

...with poise and smoulder,

seeks one very fabu-

lous, tall,

charismatic,

successful man,

35-45, to work her life out

with. 29182

**MADRID/ BARCELONA**

Creative, attractive, sim-

ple, friendly, efferves-

cent personality, seeks

cultured, N/S, slim male, 50-  
65, for holiday in May, possi-  
ble relationship. St Albans  
area. 29184

**ALL WOMAN**

40+, funny and feisty,

in West Country, reliable

and clever man. 29185

**COCKY & OPTIMISTIC**

Intelligent, slim and pretty

female, in early 40s, into

spiritual growth, books,

cooking, wine, beer and

champagne, seeks kind,

intelligent, sensitive male,

44-60, who also enjoys

travel, walks, cycling, swim-  
ming, seeks male, 40-55, simi-  
lar interests, for friend-  
ship/travel. Welsh marches. 29186

**NEW FOREST GRADUATE**

Attractive, slim, blonde, arts-

ie female, 54+, enjoys arts,

travel, eating and drink-

ing, getting out and about.

29187

**HOPELESS ROMANTIC**

Tall, slim, intelligent man, 40

enjoys sport, fitness, books,

music, travel, seeks simi-

lar male, 35-45, for friend-  
ship and romance. 29188

**CREATIVE AND STYLISH**

Attractive, slim, creative,

stylish, 30s, into design,

art, fashion, seeks simi-

lar male, 30s, for friend-  
ship. 29189

**DEREK'S THE NAME**

Kind, honest, intelligent,

gentle, good-looking male,

40s, 5'6", slim build, fit, blue

eyes, educated. Passions:

horses, riding, wildlife, sal-

mon, sailing, theatre, music

and travel, is seeking a

similar male companion. 29190

**REGENERATED EX-NEW MAN**

Boysk, 60, slim, tall, fair, laid

back, wants to rediscover

element of difference with

a feminine woman, 55-65,

gentle, buxom and curv-

ous, good looks. 29191

**GENUINE MALE**

Smart, good-looking male,

44, professional, considerate

and honest, lots to offer, many

interests, for friend-  
ship. 29192

**SIMPLY SPECIAL**

Black professional male,

51, loves music, country life,

music, is seeking a cultured,

kind, 40+, any nationality,

for friendship and more.

29193

**DAMAGE REPAIR**

Required.

Followed direct hit by bimbo,

42, 6'1", South Wales

area, seeks intelligent, sin-

gle-minded female, 36-42,

for friendship and more

29194

**TALL, DARK GRADUATE**

Female, 42, 6'1", South Wales

area, seeks intelligent, sin-

gle-minded female, 21-30,

for friendship and more

29195

**FUTURE**

Required.

Followed direct hit by bimbo,

42, 6'1", South Wales

area, seeks intelligent, sin-

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

# Dear Serena

Dear Serena,

Young women wear such revealing clothes these days that I don't know what to do with my eyes. The other day, I glanced up as I was giving a lecture (I'm a college lecturer) and directly in front of me, about five feet away and right in my line of sight, was this enormous, curvaceous cleavage. Since it was so blatantly on display, does this mean that it is all right to look? Or should one look away? To look or not to look: that is the question. Advice, please.

Andrew, Pontypridd

It's funny how everyone goes on about the ill-controlled hormonal surges of the adolescent male, when most of the time they don't bat an eyelid at the half-naked wenches who surround them. Noting scanty clothing on the young, meanwhile, is one of the first signs of ageing: the degree of nakedness in the streets is no greater now than in the Sixties, but each successive generation, once they've got their mortgages, continues to remark on the amount of

flesh on show among those younger than them.

Young women, however, still have the same schizophrenic attitude to their bodies as they have always had: they dress to stand out among their peers, but hate being singled out for it. Despite all the signs to the contrary, they don't want you to look. Avert your eyes and think of Teresa Gorman; it's the only way of getting a reputation, however unjust.

Besides, one should remember the old truism that women invariably put on a stone or so when they first leave home. The tops in question may have been perfectly decent a year ago, the wearers just haven't noticed the change in themselves. When the buttons finally give up the ghost under the strain, they will be brought, miserably, face to face with the reality of their own ageing.

Dear Serena,

I don't believe in pesticides, but the greenfly are already infesting my roses. What should I do?

Sheila, Kentish Town

Buy a hand squirts, put in a few shards of household soap, top up with warm water and shake until it's dissolved. Use half to spray on the infestation, and the remainder to wash your best party clothes. They have obviously been sitting in the back of that wardrobe for far too long.

Dear Serena,  
I was thinking of burying a time capsule for the Millennium. Where should I bury it, and what would you recommend that I put in it?

Toby, Ballygowan

Whatever you do, don't think about burying it in a greenfield site, as the chances are that it



will be dug up to make way for a supermarket by half-way through the coming century. Ever-decreasing ticket sales would suggest that the grounds of Althorp House might be a suitable spot: either that, or the environs of Selaford.

As to contents, you should bear in mind that half the population, plus the producers of children's programmes and the PR arm of the government, will be competing with you in the run-up to the big day. As a result, our descendants will have any number of photos of political leaders, pictures of the Spice Girls, platform boots, etc. As everyone else will be trying to show what a sophisticated, caring society we are, I would advise concentrating on fitting in as many of modern science's more

ghastly developments, to try to give a more rounded picture. Try, for starters, a silicone breast implant; a photograph of one of those cats with no hair; a CD case; a copy of *The Sport*; a photograph of Jocelyn Wildenstein; a Planet Hollywood menu; a Martine McCutcheon single; a Pot Noodle; a Body Shop White Musk scent spray; a picture of Canary Wharf; nylon undies; the seating plan and inner dimensions of a Concorde plane; and Anchor canned spray cream.

I, too, am planting a Millennium box in my back garden, and would welcome suggestions from readers as to what to put in it. Suggestions to the usual address, with full contents to be disclosed later.

Dear Serena,  
What will the spring bride be wearing this year? And what is the fashionable wedding present?

Polly, Nantwich

Seriously, Polly: there are support groups for this kind of thing.

Dear Serena,  
My parents are rather old-fashioned and, despite the fact that we have been living together for two years, they insist that my partner and I have separate rooms when we go up to stay. I really resent this. How do I insist on sharing a room without alienating them?

Barney, Woolwich

As I'm sure they told you when you were a teenager, it's their house, and while you're in it you have to live by their rules. Life's really too short for you to be stewing about this sort of thing at your age: you should give in gracefully. If you've been living together for two years, it's not like you're going to be wanting to have sex or anything like that.

*Knotty problems with the world today?*  
Write to Dear Serena, *The Independent*, 18th Floor, 1 Conduit Square, Conwy Wharf, London E14 5DL, where they will be treated with the customary sympathy.

## ARIES

AS THERE'S less to get you up, you'll be better off in bed (but only for recuperation or reproduction - not recreation). However, you more than anyone else in the zodiac are able to rise above your astrology and breathe the air that only existential maniacs can survive in - so concentrate on your biology and reject the past that seems to dominate your present. Your future has been receding almost mischievously and it requires you to seize it.

## TAURUS

YOU MAY suffer from errors of taste as Venus tricks you into platform soles or plastic shirts with fish swimming in them. Conceit will be a problem for you, but your mind will be too deeper things. As you listen to your subconscious, decisions will be made for you. You may feel abandoned as Venus (that slapper) moves into Gemini, but at least you can make yourself understood (that's not always a good thing, considering what you have to say).

## GEMINI

IT'S NICE that Venus has moved into your neighbourhood - now you can choose who you want and how. Your urge to become friends with everyone increases your chances of being bent triple round the bedroom furniture, and this is good insofar as it considerably increases your social repertoire and makes your limber system light up like lasers. You can trust passion but equally, you may have to throw the match in the powder keg first.

## CANCER

AS THE most attractive sign of the zodiac you might legitimately wonder why you aren't more popular. You have been taking such an interest in people and having such convincing intuitions about them that you've been carried away with your cleverness. You've created characters for them that they don't always recognise. And when they do recognise them they don't like them. Your sympathy should be kept in check this week. Your nurturing heart itself needs nurturing.

## CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON FRANK REYNOLDS



Doctor: "What did you operate on Jones for?"  
Surgeon: "A hundred pounds."  
Doctor: "No, I mean what had he got?"  
Surgeon: "A hundred pounds."

FRANK REYNOLDS'S vigour, mastery of character and easy sense of style impress forcefully today, 46 years after his death, despite the radically different shorthand convention of the modern cartoon.

Vigorous too, once the reading of stage dialogue is accepted, is the quality of his humour in 1920, after 14 years of supplying social cartoons to *Punch*. Reynolds became its art editor, taking over from FH Townsend, his brother-in-law.

Ten years later, a nervous breakdown caused him to abandon drawing for several years. Reynolds's naturalistic style is a legacy of Victorian wood-engraving tradition, but we can see in it the origins of the modern cartoon. In Reynolds' obituary, cartoonist Kenneth Bird (Fougasse) said: "His line possessed a freedom and energy which make us recognise it now as the forerunner of much of the free-style drawing of today."

## POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN

PEOPLE misconstrue the Aries sector. The aggression and energetic imbecility that we associate with the sign mark it out as the natural homeland for fascists. But though Aries are bullies (Ethel Kennedy, Tamerlane the Great) they generally lack the mental stamina to construct and adhere to an ideological framework. More simply, and less to their credit, they're not obedient enough.

However, Aries are extremely interested in power and, consequently, they tend to make quite good dictators - for just as long as the writhing proletariat can hold their interest, anyway (and goodness knows, they realise with an iron shrug, there's a very good reason why the proletariat are so proletarian!). But still, we find here in this week's astrology Papa Doc Duvalier, Kim Il Sung, Nikita Kruschev and Mrs Bandaranaike, one of the first women prime ministers - even though it was only Sri Lanka she was prime minister of

The good thing about Aries is the same as the stupid thing. When everything is laid out for them, they're quite likely to throw it all away on some trivial, frivolous experience (money, say). However, it is precisely this flaw that makes them absolutely marvellous in bed (and in choir stalls, and in taxis, and in those cupboards under the stairs while the rest of the dinner party doesn't realise they've slipped away from the table - yes, not only are they brilliant they can be as quick as they're intended to be!)

But in spite of their appetite for and talent with disasters of all sorts, those born under the sign of Aries have no sense of humour whatsoever. Anatole France, Samantha Fox, Charlie Chaplin, Spike Milligan and that fat berk Peter Ustinov. We can except Samuel Beckett from this rule but not Tama Janowitz, David Letterman, Max von Sydow or Hayley Mills.

## LEO

THERE IS a sense of danger as well as opportunity when your glorious Sun is like this with Pluto of the underworld. The answers you need are often concealed in the dark (you don't like it there because no one can see enough to admire you properly). But if you can make the journey into the interior you will emerge with rare knowledge. You are inclined to scatter rather than board, but try and curb your generosity. Leave sermons and soda water for others.

## LIBRA

ROMANCE IS what you're good at, and this trine with Neptune reveals you at your apogee. Your hands emerge from underneath your victim's clothes and this baffles them, the more so as they really are trying to resist. They believe they are fated, and they are right. There is a genius about you, you are irresistible - but only in making love, not money. When you are frank about the true shape of your desires, you are at your most potent.

## VIRGO

YOUR INABILITY to break free from the past (you call it loyalty) is thought to be one of your most attractive qualities (frankly there isn't much competition for the title). But your old friends, ex-lovers, past spouses, oh and that family of yours - even though they are acting with the best of intentions - extract a toll for their support. If you wanted to be free you could easily pull it off (though your veins might collapse in the attempt).

## SCORPIO

THOUGH PLUTO is retrograde you should be ready to experience a flash of your old magic: be careful not to let it express itself in an ugly, negative and destructive way - unless it would be obviously useful to do so. The energy may be expressed through the body (you go demon lover, although not with your regular partner), or through the mind (it puts you on a higher plane of consciousness - and this will be absolutely fatal for your career).

## SAGITTARIUS

JUPITER GETS on the wrong side of Venus, and thus your appetite for idle luxury has never been sharper (this will require money), and your ability to confound your colleagues with vicious politeness is pronounced. Your looks become more important to you than they should be. But now people will be looking behind your cosmetic creativity to see what else there is on offer. Conci is a particular problem for Sagittarius, if only because you have much to be concealed about.

## CAPRICORN

POOR CAPRICORN! Saturn's square with the moon may cause a melancholia to settle on you like a meteorological depression. It's only the past claiming you for its own (only). Take more seriously your relationship with your mother: it's probably all her fault. Life may not improve this week, but you do have a capacity for work (at least you always have had) and this will save you. Fortitude deserves admiration - and you have become better-looking recently.

## AQUARIUS

THE SUDDEN insights the moon gives you will make your settled relationship more difficult than before. But however much ignorance is necessary for bliss, knowledge is necessary for happiness. You find it difficult letting go of the past but more than ever you want to incorporate your past with your present. Clever ways of taking advantage of the moment will help your finances. You are startling, exciting, imaginative - but not kind. That's what makes you successful.

## PISCES

UNUSUAL ROMANCE is indicated by a favourable aspect between Venus and Neptune. For that to register with you, it'll have to be a very unusual romance (there's a double Pisces thing about these planets). So you may find yourself upside down round the bedposts. Maybe your partner will suffer from a disability (being a man, for example). The danger is you'll give so much as there'll be nothing left of you, and b) your partner will find your generosity disgusting.

## CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON

FRANK REYNOLDS



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Doctor: "No, I mean what had he got?"  
Surgeon: "A hundred pounds."

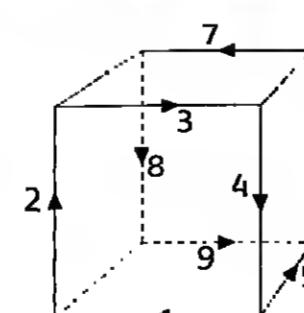
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Frank Reynolds's

## PUZZLEMASTER

BY CHRIS MASLANKA



is there of solving problems with no track record, such as global warming, overpopulation, loss of biodiversity, genetic tampering? We have to change the way we think. Lead on, MacMaslanka!

- Points to ponder
- 1 Families stop having children after their first boy. Boys and girls are equiprobable and multiple births are impossible. Will this affect the ratio of sexes? What will the average number of children be in a family?
  - 2 How many distinguishable cubes can be made by painting each face either white or black?
  - 3 Find a one-word anagram of IMPLACABLE ROT

Solutions to last week's problems

- 1 (see diagram) The fly walks, at most, 9cm. Let each edge traversal be marked by an arrow with two ends(!). Three arrowheads can only meet at the start or finish. The remaining 6 corners can have, at most, 2 arrow-heads. This makes 6 corners with two half-arrows, and two corners with three half-arrows, making 9 arrows and so 9 edges traversed.

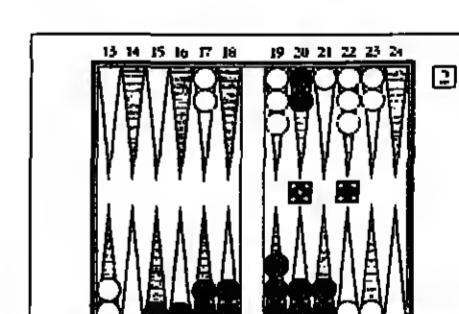
2 Two boys and 2 girls is more likely than a boy and three girls.

3 TYPE A PHRASE = HAPPY EASTER.

Comments to: [indyp@puzzlemaster.co.uk](mailto:indyp@puzzlemaster.co.uk)

## BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



IN THE box sat the Enigmatic Englishman (EE). In the opposing team were Barry Bigplay (BB), the captain, and the Prophylactic Pole (PP). They discussed the play of black's 54.

"We're winning comfortably," said PP, "no need for any excitement. I think we should play 10/5, 9/5. Obviously we can't play 8/3, 7/3 as that would leave four blot - far too dangerous."

"I must disagree," countered BB, "now is exactly the moment for a big play. Four blots there may be after 8/3, 7/3 but EE would have only eight numbers to hit one of the blots, and even then we would get a lot of return shots. Look at the potential for winning a gammon if EE fails to

enter. I'm sorry, PP, but I must play 8/3\*, 7/3."

"I haven't voluntarily left four blots since LL (Lord Lucan) stopped playing - but if you must, you must," said PP resignedly.

EE inwardly groaned. It was obvious to him that pointing was the correct play and the one he feared most. Sadly for him it was BB who was the captain and not PP. A few rolls later EE duly lost a gammon.

Later that evening he put the position into Snowie and discovered that 8/3\*, 7/3 was correct by the huge margin of 3 per cent. In fact any hitting move was better than the pusillanimous 10/5, 9/5. That old backgammon adage, "To the aggressor the spoils" had been proven once again.

## SUNDAY TELEVISION &amp; RADIO

BBC1

BBC2

ITV LWT

Channel 4

Channel 5

ITV/Regions

**6.40 Teletubbies** (4172527) 7.20 Match of the Day (4173304). **8.30 Breakfast** with Frost (55275). **9.30 Heaven and Earth** (33782). **10.30 Ballykissangel** (2638411). **11.20 Gardeners' World** Take Two (5262965). **11.30 Country File** (4701). **12.00 News** (8349324). **12.05 Turning Points** (9348695). **12.10 Jobs for the Girls** (1670430). **1.00 Eastenders** (743140). **2.25 Are You Being Served?** (5168895). **2.55 All along the Watchtower** (2175956).

**3.25 Sunday Grandstand Rugby Union: Wales vs England.** John Inverdale introduces live coverage of the Five Nations clash from Wembley. Commentary by Bill McLaren and Eddie Butler (S) (T) (46670492).

**6.00 News; Weather** (T) (549343).

**6.20 Local News; Weather** (711633).

**6.25 Songs of Praise.** From Boston in Lincolnshire (S) (T) (737053).

**7.00 FILM Sabrina** (Sydney Pollack 1995 US). Julia Ormond is the Long Island Cinderella, played by Audrey Hepburn in the Billy Wilder original. She's the chauffeur's daughter caught between serious businessman older brother Harrison Ford (too stodgy in the role) and feckless charmer of younger bro' (Greg Kinnear). Wilder's 1954 original was no great shakes, and this isn't really that much better (S) (T) (71324).

**9.00 The 51st British Academy Film Awards with Jonathan Ross.** From the Business Design Centre in Islington, introduced by Ross. A sort of domestic rerun of the Oscars, with more or less the same movies and actors in contention. Plus, a special tribute to Alfred Hitchcock on the 100th anniversary of his birth (S) (T) (1237).

**10.30 News; Weather** (T) (507701).

**10.45 Hillsborough - the Legacy:** Everyman Special. Explores the lasting impact of the Hillsborough stadium disaster (S) (677695).

**11.35 Harbour Lights** (S) (T) (726904).

**12.25 FILM Butterfield 8** (Daniel Man 1960 US). Call girl Elizabeth Love Songs (11.00). Parkinson's Sunday Supplement (100). Desmond Carrington. **3.00 Russell Davies.** **4.30 Freewheelin': Step by Step** (4-50). **5.30 Something Simple** (5.00). Pam Ayres. **7.00 Hugh Scully.** **8.30 Sunday Hall Hour** (9.00 Alan Keith). **10.00 Malcolm Laycock.** **11.00 The David Jacobs Collection** (9.00-11.00). **12.00 Leszekiak.** **3.00 - 4.00 Alex Lester.**

**6.30 The Busy World of Richard Scarry** (976164). **8.55 A Monster Holiday** (927275). **9.25 Gadget Boy** (708152). **9.55 The Wayne Manifesto** (7095527). **10.20 Sweet Valley High** (1654888). **10.40 Film:** Johnny Mystic (173072). **12.00 O Zone** (730072). **12.15 Lee and Herring's This Morning with Richard, Not Judy** (5024695). **1.00 Storyville: Jerusalem** (1646951).

**2.30 FILM The Desert Song** (Bruce Humberstone 1953 UK). Sigmund Romberg's operetta (7684963).

**4.20 FILM The Quiet Man** (John Ford 1952 US). American boxer John Wayne returns to Galway and woos Maureen O'Hara (T) (85532237).

**6.25 Star Trek: Voyager.** An attack on Voyager interrupts James' holodeck programme (S) (T) (6149898).

**7.10 Cold War.** "Soldiers of God 1979 - 83." The Cold War story continues with US conflict with the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and the Soviet entanglement in Afghanistan - Russia's Vietnam (S) (T) (460053).

**8.00 The Natural World.** Tim Pigott-Smith narrates this look at the flora and fauna of the Isles of Scilly (S) (T) (808430).

**8.50 Vintner's Tales** (S) (735053).

**9.00 Golf - the Masters.** Steve Rider introduces live coverage of the conclusion of this year's Masters from Atlanta, Georgia. Who will be presented with the coveted Green Jacket? The commentators are Peter Alliss, Alex Hay and Howard Clark (S) (875091).

**12.00 CHOICE Demon Seed** (Donald Cammell 1977 US). Sci-fi thriller starring Julie Christie. See *Film of the Day*, below (54225).

**2.00 BBC Learning Zone: GCSE Bitesize Revision: Geography 1** (348R3). **4.00 Languages: Get By German** (16193). To 3am.

**6.00 GMTV** (18614). **8.00 Diggity** (3606256). **9.25 Hey Arnold** (706771). **9.50 Animal Ark** (703782). **10.15 Power Rangers** (975121). **10.40 Oggy and the Cockroaches** (964939). **11.00 Sunday Morning** (74411). **12.00 The Rock That Rolled Away** (77459). **12.30 Crosscall** (95343). **1.00 Jonathan Dimbleby** (90988). **2.00 Murray and Martin's F1 Special** (1679179).

**2.30 The Big Match: Newcastle vs Tottenham Hotspur.** Live coverage from old Trafford (kick-off 3pm) of the FA Cup semi-final (T) (743053).

**5.30 F1: Brazilian Grand Prix Live.** Jim Rosenthal introduces live coverage of the Brazilian Grand Prix from Interlagos. With commentary by Murray Walker and Martin Brundle, studio analysis by Tony Jardine, and pit-lane reports from James Allen and Louise Goodman (S) (16740633).

**6.15 London Tonight** (T) (83053).

**8.20 ITV News; Weather** (T) (404546).

**8.30 Coronation Street.** Mike has a secret liaison (S) (T) (3850).

**9.00 CHOICE Rhinoceros.** Robson Green and Niamh Cusack star in this one-off romantic drama. See *Drama of the Day*, below (S) (T) (6411).

**9.00 FILM Nuns on the Run** (Jonathan Lynn 1990 UK). Silly, sub-A Fish Called Wanda-style farce, not really harnessing the talents of its two stars, Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane. They play the pretty criminals who take refuge from a Triad gang by donning gowns and wimples (T) (50166332).

**10.00 ITV News; Weather** (T) (858072).

**11.15 F1: Brazilian Grand Prix Highlights** (551701). **12.20 Still in Bed with McDinner** (988231). **12.50 Film:** 1969 (729473). **2.35 Club@Vision** (1283183). **3.45 Jonathan Dimbleby** (163102). **4.00 Cyberset** (54086). **4.30 ITV Nightscreen** (97744). To 5.30am.

**6.20 Magic Roundabout** (258107). **6.25 Ivor the Engine** (939152). **6.30 The Clangers** (9761681). **6.40 Bagpuss** (7371966). **8.05 Saltys' Lighthouse** (84898). **7.30 Bug Alert!** (803987).

**7.55 Insectors** (8363430). **8.45 Saved by the Bell** (608889). **8.45 City Guys** (9761693). **9.10 Cadog** (8304633).

**9.45 Planet Pop** (743091). **10.00 The Waltons** (92817). **11.00 Hollyoaks** (1578072). **12.10 Dawson's Creek** (116227). **1.10 Doors to Manual** (2224633). **1.45 Brussels - Behind Closed Doors** (177256). **2.45 Football Italia** (2982966). **5.00 Travolot Treks** (2362212).

**5.25 FILM Aces High** (Jack Gold 1976 UK). RC Sheriff's Great War play *Journey's End*, transposed to the aerial dog fights over the trenches. Malcolm McDowell, Christopher Plummer, Simon Ward and Peter Firth play the officer class fighter aces (26566099).

**7.30 The Establishment.** Nick Danziger meets Sir Michael Atiyah, Master of Trinity College (324).

**8.00 CHOICE The Real James Goldsmith.** The controversial self-made billionaire analysed. See *Profile of the Day*, below (T) (1986).

**9.00 FILM Taking Care of Business** (Arthur Hiller 1990 US). Interesting stars, but a tired idea (*Trading Places* by other means basically), this is a late entry in the yuppie nightmare cycle. James Belushi is jovial party-type who finds the Filofax, contacts book and credit cards of upright businessman Charles Grodin, who is left stranded on the mean streets of LA (T) (920609).

**10.45 Motorbike Madness.** The Isle of Man motorcycle race (7589695).

**11.50 The 11 O'Clock Show** (333343). **12.40 Babylon 5** (1354980). **1.35 Dark Skies** (R) (8628812). **2.25 For the Love of R** (F) (5256454). **3.20 Hell, Texas**, Home (6222029).

**3.50 FILM Ju Dou** (Zhang Yimou 1990 China). Oscar-nominated rural tragedy (S) (3542454). To 5.25am.

**6.30 Hor Property** (408904). **7.00 Dappledown Farm** (2756333). **7.30 Milk-shake!** (2503091). **7.35 Wimber's House** (4922169). **8.05 From Jesus to Christ** (8546519). **8.00 Stick Around** (8737188). **9.30 State of Mind** (803987).

**10.00 Mirror, Mirror** (4002255). **11.00 USA High** (1946237). **11.30 Singled Out** (1947966). **12.00 My Story** (877324). **12.30 Inside Out** (4681463).

**1.00 Anything's Possible** (31351362).

**1.10 5 News** (27293029). **1.20 Frostup on Sunday** (S) (3194088). **1.30 Movie Chart Show** (3683053).

**1.30 Exclusive** (7034693). **2.50 Family Affairs Omnibus** (47549140).

**5.00 Serious Money** (8604527).

**5.35 FILM A Far Off Place** (Mikael Salomon 1993 US). Impressively photographed widescreen Disney film based on two books by Leunens van der Post. When their parents are murdered by poachers, two teenagers face a daunting trek across the Kalahari desert (T) (16835463).

**7.30 5 News and Sport** (S) (T) (6099237).

**8.00 Ascension Island - Life on a Volcano.** Ascension Island was a remote Atlantic volcanic peak until the Falklands were turned into a communications base. This film explores the effects of the military build-up on the wildlife (T) (2029094).

**9.00 FILM Taking Care of**

**Business** (Arthur Hiller 1990 US).

Interesting stars, but a tired idea (*Trading Places* by other means basically), this is a late entry in the yuppie nightmare cycle. James Belushi is jovial party-type who finds the Filofax, contacts book and credit cards of upright businessman Charles Grodin, who is left stranded on the mean streets of LA (T) (920609).

**11.00 Water Rats** (S) (5120886).

**11.55 The Comedy Network** (6951256). **12.25 Major League Baseball** (S) (4834738). **4.40 You Again?** (F) (9497164). **5.05 Move On Up** (F) (68324673). **5.30 Serious Money** (F) (S) (6809367). To 6am.

**12.25 Motorcycling** (5020717). **1.00 Cycling** (20411). **4.00 Boxing** (41401). **4.40 NASCAR** (24275). **8.00 Aerobics** (826333). **8.10 Extreme Sailing** (82940). **9.00 World Wide Rugby** (81828). **11.00 Golf** (81272). **12.00 Sportscast** (829091). **12.30 Tennis** (2103431). **12.30 Close**.

**1.00 Waterpolo** (2103430). **1.30 Westcountry** (51620459). **1.30 Update** (857904). **1.30 West Country Weekend Match** (852453). **2.00 Murray and Martin's F1 Preview** (8797169). **3.15 Westcountry News** (483053). **4.30 Soundtrax** (8361683). **4.50 TV Nightscreen** (74471980). **5.00 Coronation Street** (15560).

**5.00 Meridian**

**As LWT except** (12.20 Lifeline

(7680458). **12.35 Central**

**Newsweek** (93434). **12.55 Central News** (8440693). **1.00 Coronation Street** (15560).

**1.00 HTV West**

**As HTV Wales except** (12.25 Lifeline

(7680459). **1.00 Hope and Glory** (1979).

**1.00 Meridian**

**As LWT except** (12.30 Lifeline

(7441230). **12.50 Meridian News and Weather** (7695379). **2.00 The Making of Arlington Road** (1979).

**3.00 Meridian Tonight** (85033).

**4.30 Soundtrax** (8361683). **4.50 TV Nightscreen** (74471980). **5.00 Coronation Street** (15560).

**5.00 Yorkshire**

**As LWT except** (12.30 Goals

(85343). **12.45 Calendar**

**News and Weather** (8674904).

**2.05 Murray and Martin's F1 Specia**

(8562275). **8.45 Calendar News and Sport** (483053). **12.50 Cybernet** (173033). **1.25 Film:** *Lucky* (1995). **2.00 Life in a Box** (199



## JASPER REES

TELEVISION REVIEW



**MOTOWN LIVE.**

This new series, exclusive to UK Arena, features live performances from USA's hottest R'n'B acts and celebrates the Motown legend with some of the labels most renowned talent. Tonight's guests include Kirk Franklin, Al Green and Yolanda Adams.

**Tonight 6.10pm**

**UK ARENA**

AT THE end of *Walden on* the head and shoulders of Brian Walden faded to black, to be replaced by the head and shoulders of Adolf Hitler. I'm sure they were striving for an altogether grander effect - to suggest that the charisma and talent of Walden are a match for any historical figure who falls under his forensic gaze in both these series and its predecessor. *Walden on* Heroes. But it looked like some wag had scrawled a cartoon mustache onto Walden's upper lip. Between one man's communication skills and another's deranged seduction of the viewer there is but a small smear of facial hair. Walden on *Virtutis* is basically a radio programme that has wandered onto television. There is no visual diversion, nothing for the viewer to process but words. What you get with pictures is the sight, as well as the sound, of Brian Walden. The choreography apart from some semaphoring with his arms, I'm confined to the abject swagger of his staggering jowls which shudder in a chorus of hyperenthusiasm every time their owner shakes his head to punctuate a particularly un-punctuated sentence.

Van Halen get an eyelid of virtuousity. Walden delivers those kultic lectures without an audience. Quite why I'm not embarrassed to tell that he isn't reading. Here, you know he isn't because he inserts a signal between two parts of his monologue. One on Friday - perhaps hints at even the BBC is tired of and aggression continue to putting old wine in new bottles.

The world. To any other programme, the director would have "Cut!" at the first "um", but Walden stands at his desk, silent. They are, essentially, two men. They may even be written into the script.

I wonder whether his introductory subject wasn't also a duty of his interview. He was, after all, a show. Not far from the truth, in the same way that no tour of Paris is complete without a trip up the Eiffel Tower - so something you can miss. I'm expecting greater novelty with his pieces on Saeter-dam, Hussein and Nero. Walden battled hard to insist that he had found new things to say about Hitler. His career raised questions that are "insufficiently discussed". His relevance "can't be denied, but it ought to be". He was in Nazi Germany. Does this mean that Walden didn't face the Hitler who was broadcast to the world? And was he broadcast to the universal acclaim, not once but twice on the selfsame channel?

You can't be more substitutively satisfied than that. Stuck, like the Third Reich, Walden sufficiently disclosed. Laughter in the House (BBC1), which concluded with the 1980s clips of a PIU trend in humour, wouldn't be able to tell that he cussed were repeated this week, isn't reading. Here, you know he isn't because he inserts a signal between two parts of his monologue. One on Friday - perhaps hints at even the BBC is tired of and aggression continue to putting old wine in new bottles.

## BBC1

## BBC2

## ITV LWT

## Channel 4

## Channel 5

# SATURDAY TELEVISION

THE WEEKEND REVIEW  
The Independent 10 April 1999



**7.00 The Masters (F) (T) (984478). 7.25 News; Weather (2878504).**

**7.30 Children's BBC: Freeman Sam (F) (8285213). 7.45 Little Monsters (F) (S) (8551857). 7.50 The Incredible Hulk and She-Hulk (S) (8552759). 8.10 The Silver Surfer (S) (4501039). 8.35 The Frighteners (F) (S) (803403).**

**8.40 Live and Kicking (S) (9737720). 12.30 News; Weather (T) (981922).**

**12.45 Grandstand, introduced by Dae Wyman from Altrincham (1850393). 12.30 Football Focus (B185258). 1.05 Grandstand Guide to the Grand National (37243128). 3.05 Grand National Bitching (615584). 3.45 The Run (1898 Grand National (203136)). 4.00 The Race (9845200). 4.35 Rugby Union: France vs Scotland Points (F) (S) (9260039). 11.30 The Sky Night (F) (S) (4146452).**

**12.20 Film The Naked Star (Anthony Mann 1953 US).**

**12.30 Weather (S) (T) (225100). 10.10 ITV News: Pleasant Land (T) (82229). 7.30 The British Family: Sources and Myths (T) (24836). 8.00 Weekend 24 (S) (8887). 8.30 Open Saturday (S) (88986774). 10.40 See Hear on Saturday (S) (F183403). 11.25 Turnip (F) (S) (9260039).**

**1.00 Blitzen Britain (F) (T) (9305584).**

**2.00 Big Blue Union: France vs Scotland. Live coverage of the Five Nations clash from Paris (kick-off 215pm).**

**3.05 Film Dunkirk (Leslie Norman 1958 UK).**

**4.00 Top 2 (S) (781457).**

**4.30 London Weekend Tonight (T) (1974855). 4.45 ITV News; Weather (T) (5000045).**

**5.00 Film Brazilian Grand Prix Qualifying Live. Jimmie White (S) (T) (23).**

**5.45 Children's BBC: Families at War. Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer present a kind of update of The Generation Game. Sort of. See Gemini Show of the Day, below (S) (688582).**

**6.30 Big Break. You've been smothered, will Jim Davidson and his wretched chums Misk Davis, Tony Knowles and Jimmy White (S) (T) (23).**

**7.00 Whatever You Want. Gaby Roslin lives it for three Georgians who want to blow up a tower block, thus sparing whale watchers (S) (T) (60720).**

**7.00 News; Sport; Weather (T) (908318).**

**7.15 Children's Correspondent: Dead Kid Walking. Edward Stourton reports on how the United States remains the only country in the western world that executes killers of crimes not committed when they were Isamis. See Documentary of the Day, below (S) (T) (85318).**

**8.00 Stopps and Bang. The off of a free piano turns out to be more trouble than it worth (F) (T) (872).**

**8.30 Film - the Meisters. Slave Rider introduces five covers of dry lines from the Augustus National course in Georgia. Commentary from Peter Alias, Alex Hay, Howard Clark and Douglas Donnelly (S) (T) (2723565).**

**9.00 Birth Race 2000: Tonight's the Night. An evening on How to conceive a millennium baby... (20738).**

**9.10 On the Job with Leisa Riley. Ermittler's Lisa Riley presents a sitcom clips on the subject (990445).**

**9.40 Tonight's the Night - Update (48588).**

**9.50 A-Z of Conception. The hows, whys, dos and don'ts of making a baby (89492).**

**10.28 Tonight's the Night - Upstate. More love-making couples speak to Davies McCall (790010).**

**10.35 Animal Person (240107).**

**10.40 Match of the Day. Ray Stubbs, with Alan Hansen and Mark Lowrance, introduces the best of this action from the Premiership, including extended highlights of Aston Villa vs Southampton (S) (T) (761510).**

**11.10 Orient National Review. Jump-by-jump re-run of this season's big race (S) (T) (446720).**

**12.15 Film The Long Goodbye (Robert Altman 1973 US). Elliott Gould is a PI who returns to the city of his excellent character adaptation. See Film of the Day, below (Then Weather) (T) (825497).**

**2.05 Top of the Pops (S) (T) (577850).**

**2.35 John BBC News 24 (2470904). To 6.40am.**

**6.00 Sesame Street (F) (S) (83862). 7.00 Bush Tales (R) (6569132). 7.10 T4: Dig, Dig, Dog and Digger (285184).**

**7.00 Milkshake! (S) (2576519). 7.35 Wimble House (F) (413032). 8.10 England's Great and**

**(F) (674853). 8.30 The End Byton Serial Series (F)**

**(S) (883336). 8.30 Robotrix (F) (247565). 9.45 NBA**

**9.50 Open Saturday (S) (88986774). 10.40 Longravende (F) (S)**

**(403584). 10.30 The Wonder Years (F183403). 11.30 Party Shorts (S) (1961871). 11.45 Beverly Hills 90210 (F) (S) (784592). 12.30 Stopped Out (F) (S) (831310). 1.05**

**Billy Lively (3953240). 1.30 Rad (61638213). 1.50**

**2.00 Film Runaway! (David Lowell Rich 1973 US). A**

**group of weekend skiers find themselves on a runaway**

**train when the brakes freeze. Ben Johnson and Ben**

**Murphy are the stars (S) (5694946).**

**3.05 Film They Who Dare (Lewis Marnies 1953 UK).**

**Directed by Marnies, who made the anti-war classic, A**

**Quarter of a Million, this is a grippingly**

**violent, action-packed thrill ride on Rhodes. Dick Goddard and Denham Eliot cast Richard Attenborough lead the entirely predictable cast**

**(188203).**

**4.00 Racing from Hemilton Park. Not much of a card**

**race, but if you fancy a spot of**

**punting between the Liverpool races, Channel 4 are**

**featuring the 10, 140, 210 and 240pm races (8883381).**

**5.05 Brokkaide Omnibus. Lindsay, Jimmy, Mett, Greg**

**and Susanna feature in last week's storylines (S) (T)**

**(882620).**

**6.00 Sesame Street (F) (S) (83862). 7.00 Bush Tales**

**(R) (6569132). 7.14 Dig, Dig, Dog and Digger (285184).**

**7.30 T4: Home to Rent (F) (8152). 8.00 The Magic Roundabout (285184).**

**8.30 Morning Line (S) (13381). 10.00**

**Weather (T) (1857152). 1.05 London Weekend Today**

**(S) (5588443). 1.45 NBA**

**9.15 Film The Return of the Musketeers (Richard**

**Hibberd 1993 UK/France). It was during the making of this**

**movie that Roy Kinnear fell from a horse and died. It's a**

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**Stewart tracking killer Robert Ryan and girlfriend Janet**

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